

# THE AMERICAN PROSPECT

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A JOURNAL FOR THE LIBERAL IMAGINATION

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by Robert Geddes

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Paul Starr, Stanley B. Greenberg, Theda Skocpol, Jeff Faux

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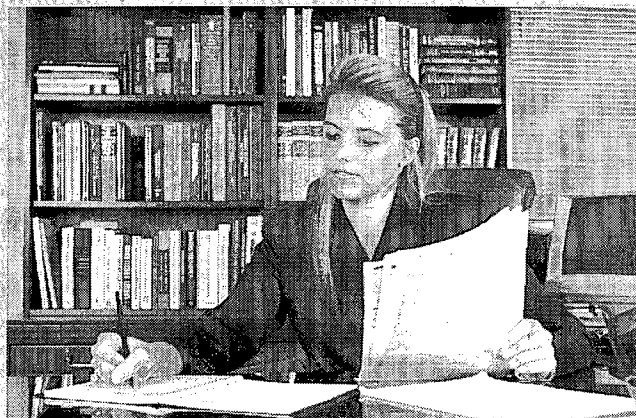
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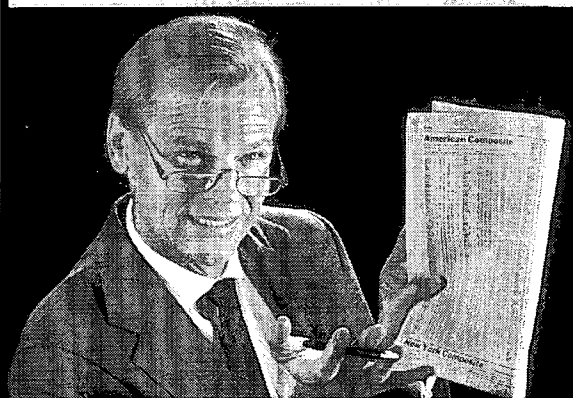
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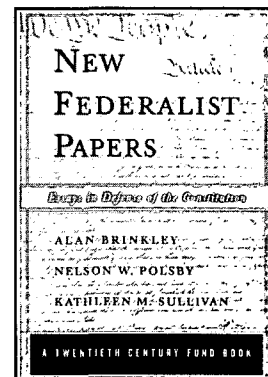
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# THE AMERICAN PROSPECT

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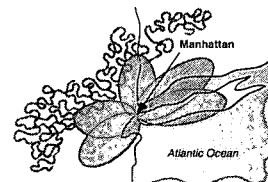
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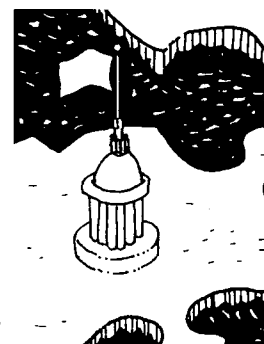
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Political excess in the twentieth century gives libertarianism understandable appeal. But caveat emptor; the path from Isaiah Berlin does not lead to Charles Murray.

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**I**s America continuing to move toward the Republicans? Some new social and demographic trends suggest that partisan affections are very much up for grabs.

In three companion articles, Paul Starr, Jeff Faux, and Stanley Greenberg and Theda Skocpol assess the prospects, and tactics, of the Democrats. Two of the essays—by Starr and Greenberg and Skocpol—have been adapted from a volume, *The New Majority*, edited by Greenberg and Skocpol and just published by Yale University Press. Starr's article was already off to the printer when *National Review* blazoned on a recent cover the phrase, "The Emerging Democratic Majority," offering an unexpected signal from another shore that the political current may be shifting. In coming issues, we will continue this exploration with articles on the future of the Republicans.

**T**he design of cities isn't just an "urban problem." As Robert Geddes shows in this issue's cover story, "Metropolis Unbound," cities are exploding into their surrounding regions, erasing traditional distinctions between city and suburb. This development underlines the need for more comprehensive systems of metropolitan governance. It also highlights the connections between environmental and social concerns: Some measures that limit sprawl—such as the "growth boundaries" in Oregon that Geddes discusses—can also redirect development toward older urban centers and reduce economic isolation. From this new geography could come a new politics.

**E**lsewhere in these pages, we treat a new and double-edged trend—"faith-based services." The idea, promoted by fundamentalist conservatives and a sprinkling of urban activist liberals, is that the churches can help vulnerable families and at-risk youth, where other inner-city institutions have often failed. The idea has its attractions. From the social gospel movement of the last century to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream of racial harmony and the Catholic Bishops' letter on the economy, faith has

often been a source of progressive inspiration and social conscience; YMCAs and religious hospitals have nurtured the young and tended the sick. But tax support for faith-based public services raises First Amendment concerns. Authors Isaac Kramnick and Laurence Moore parse the complexities of this issue, in "Can the Churches Save the Cities?" Wendy Kaminer offers a more skeptical view in "Unholy Alliance."

**W**ith this issue we welcome back as *Prospect* contributing editors Steven Kelman and Alicia Munnell, both of whom served with distinction in the Clinton administration. And for the first time we have acquired a development director, Cynthia Sadler, who held a similar position at the Economic Policy Institute. We also salute our departing circulation director, Gina Costello, who has resigned, after more than four years with the *Prospect*, to take a senior position in the technical services marketing office at Harvard. □

## THE AMERICAN PROSPECT

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ROBERT REICH

# The Missing Options

**H**ow the national debate is framed, and what options are put before the public, can be more important ultimately than the immediate choices made. The framing defines the breadth of the nation's ambition, and thus either raises or lowers expectations, fires or depresses imaginations, ignites or deflates political movements.

A future generation pondering the present era may find it strange that the nation focused most of its collective energies between the start of 1993 and the end of 1997 on bringing the federal budget into balance by 2002 (after which time it will likely fall out of balance again), cutting taxes (mostly on the wealthy), and forcing the poorest Americans off welfare without a guarantee of a job at a livable wage. Republicans had wanted to do all of this somewhat more aggressively, and Democrats, somewhat more equitably. But the differences were of degree and there was no real debate. The larger issues facing the nation had either been put aside, or were declared, by way of magical reasoning, to be remedied by one or the other of these barely distinguishable directions.

The deficit, which so obsessed the nation for a decade, began to vanish during the spring and summer of 1997, even before the White House and Congress reached agreement, with great fanfare, on how to make it do so officially. The economic recovery had boosted earnings so much, particularly in the upper brackets, that tax revenues poured into the Treasury in far greater numbers than had been foreseen. The truly astonishing thing was not the economy's buoyancy at the time, but how our nation's leaders chose to spend most of the unanticipated bounty: Rather than dedicate it to what had been neglected and was most needed—universal health care, child care, better schools, jobs for the poor who would be shoved off welfare, public transportation, and other means of helping the bot-

tom half of our population move upward—they devised the largest federal tax cut on upper incomes since Ronald Reagan signed the tax cut of 1981.

**A**ccording to an analysis by Citizens for Tax Justice, almost half of the tax cut will go to the richest 5 percent of Americans; the richest fifth will receive more than 75 percent of its benefits. The average tax cut for middle-income families and individuals will be less than \$200 per year, while the richest 1 percent will pay more than \$16,000 less. Most of these cuts will explode in later years: The Joint Committee on Taxation figures that the legislation will cost \$95 billion from 1997 through 2002, but the cost will expand to \$180 billion in the next five years.

New funds (some \$24 billion over five years) are allocated to provide health coverage to some uninsured children, a worthy accomplishment. But this progressive step is tempered by cuts in Medicaid to the poor (about \$13 billion, achieved mainly by lowering payments to hospitals that treat the poor). Medicare is also cut, through reductions in payments to doctors and hospitals. (A proposal to reduce Medicare benefits to wealthy retirees was scrapped.) With almost no public discussion at all, annual defense spending will rise steadily from \$269 billion in 1998 to \$289.6 billion in 2002. Meanwhile all other discretionary spending will be held to a nominal \$256 billion per year, which means steadily fewer dollars when adjusted for inflation. Fewer resources will be available to people who are poor or of modest means, for education, job training, low-income housing, mass transit, food stamps, or even inspections of factories to ensure safety and adequate wages.

If "balancing the budget by the year 2002" were the most important goal the United States could achieve now, such a regressive tilt would still be cause for alarm. But it is not the most important goal. The entire federal budget is an accounting device, and a curious one at that—calculated very differently from the way private businesses do their books. A company would never show a deficit in its income statement when investing in new machinery or a new factory; these would be considered capital expenditures rather than charges against income. The only debits would be on the depreciation of the existing capital stock. But in the federal budget, all outlays are considered

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spending, regardless of what the spending is for. There is no separate budget calculated to show investments in, say, the capacity of all Americans to be more productive in the future. In Britain, by contrast, budgets are generally balanced for current outlays, and deficits are permitted so long as they support investment. This process then invites a public dialogue about the extent and nature of social investment, and gives legitimacy to the idea of borrowing to invest.

Far more important than budget balance is for the United States to get back on the track we were on during the first three decades after World War II—a track of higher growth and a more inclusive, more equitable society. We got off that track in the late 1970s and have veered even further off it since. It is good news that six years of economic recovery have generated 13 million net new jobs, and that the rate of unemployment—as I write this, under 5 percent—is lower than in almost a quarter century. But the sobering news is that six years of economic recovery have failed to reduce the trend toward inequality that began in the late 1970s.

From 1989 to 1997, the real wages of the bottom tenth of workers stopped dropping, but their fringe benefits—employer-provided health care and pensions—sharply declined until they virtually disappeared. Meanwhile, the wages of the majority of workers in the middle continued to erode, with the median worker's wage sinking 5 percent. Even in the robust 12 months from the middle of 1996 to the middle of 1997, as corporate profits ballooned and the stock market soared beyond even most Wall Street bulls' imaginations, the real median weekly wage of full-time employees increased just three-tenths of 1 percent. Taking into account the decline in employer-provided health and pension benefits, the bottom half of the American workforce continued its descent.

Many families have made up for the steady decline by working longer hours, and the current tight labor market has enabled them to do so to an even greater extent. But for most mortals who do not adore what they do for pay, more time at work does not translate into a higher standard of living. At the same time, the upper reaches of America—mostly college-educated, mostly professional or managerial—have never had it so good. Their pay and benefits have continued to rise and

---

their shares of stock have exploded in value. (Nearly 40 percent of America's financial wealth is held by the richest 1 percent of the population. Even taking into account pension wealth held on behalf of workers, the top 1 percent still owns 22 percent of all financial assets.)

**T**he budget agreement's regressive lurch does not help the situation, to say the least. America is strangely immobilized. Rather than giving us the confidence we need to move forward, the good economic news on growth and jobs—combined with a rare period of world peace—seems to have anesthetized us. Future generations looking back on this era will ask why—when today's Americans had no hot or cold war to fight, no depression or recession to cope with, no great drain on our resources or our spirits—we did so little. Little, that is, relative to what the situation demanded; little, relative to what we could have done. Did we simply assume that the economic expansion would last forever? That the sharp disparities of income, wealth, and opportunity would not have serious consequences for our future and our children's future?

The real answer is simpler, and all the sadder for its simplicity. The larger issue was not placed on the national agenda because neither party, and neither political branch of government, had a stake in putting it there. Republicans did not want to talk about income inequality, because they had no answer acceptable to most of their supporters. Some Democrats were willing to speak of it, but pollsters often cautioned against doing so. Americans, pollsters counseled, did not want to hear about it; they would rather dwell on the good news. Besides, any serious program to reverse these trends would require large public investments combined with a far more progressive tax system, and neither seemed remotely in the cards. The 1993 campaign to provide health insurance for the 43 million Americans without it had gone badly, after all. And given that Democrats had run the White House for over four years, two of them with Democratic Congresses, it would be unwise to speak of such a large, unfinished agenda at this stage. Better to take credit for what had gone well. Thus it was that the two parties reached tacit agreement: a conspiracy of silence.

The average working American knew that the economic expansion was not trickling down, but

remained hopeful it would, eventually. Elites—including much of the national media—were tired of discussing the problem of inequality even if they had once been interested. Most saw scant evidence of declining incomes and of poverty, because it was now more sharply cordoned off from them than before. It occurred elsewhere; it happened to different people. The elites didn't see, or didn't want to see, connections between widening inequality and the political tilt toward regressive public policies, as exemplified by the budget agreement. They didn't see, or didn't want to see, the wave of "soft" money flowing into election campaigns from business and the very wealthy, and the increasing disengagement from electoral politics of blue-collar and very poor Americans.

How the debate is framed—what options are put before the public—makes all the difference. Over five years, the national debate shifted, and it shriveled. At first the central question was: Shall we invest in our future—including providing universal health care—by raising taxes or by borrowing (or by what combination)? Then the question quickly became: Shall we invest in our future or shall we balance the budget (or what combination)? And then: Shall we balance the budget in ten years *or* by 2002? Then: Shall we balance the budget by 2002 and *also* cut taxes? Then: Shall we cut taxes equitably *or* will most of the tax cuts go to the wealthy? At each step, the frame got smaller, the options less relevant, and the broad public less interested in the outcome.

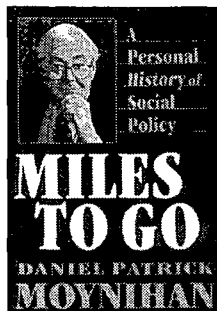
Part of the progressive challenge is to create vibrant debate about how to restore shared prosperity to this nation. But bringing this question to the forefront will not be the greatest challenge, for in a democracy a looming issue like this does not remain off the table indefinitely. The larger debate will occur, with or without progressive leadership. Perhaps we have only to wait for the next recession for it to begin. But this is a dismal strategy for liberals. The greater challenge will be to fill the larger frame with positive visions of a more inclusive society, and options for achieving it. Otherwise, the coming debate will simmer with the rancor of those who for years have been excluded from the general prosperity. And the next generation of Americans, looking back in puzzlement on this one, will inherit a politics of resentment.□



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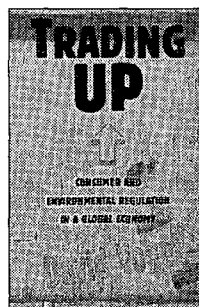
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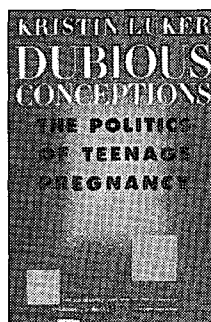
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## MOYNIHAN UNMONOCLED

To the Editors:

In his article, "The Moynihan Enigma" [July-August 1997], Jacob Heilbrunn gets all manner of things mixed up. That his subject went to the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy as "part of his Naval officer's training program" and there imbibed "the school's Wilsonian gospel." No great harm, but even so: I was out of the Navy a year and more before arriving at Fletcher, which then, as now, was a diverse institution. Then there is this business of my going off to the London School of Economics and "adopting a monocle." Honest, wrong place for a monocle in 1951! This bizarre assertion has been around for some time. The young conservative writer Dinesh D'Souza included it in an article in *American Heritage* in 1984. Curious, I asked where on earth he had picked that up. *Rolling Stone*, was the reply. Mr. Heilbrunn?

Then there is the matter of my having headed a commission "on the Central Intelligence Agency" which failed to "come up with a realistic program to reform it." I assume he has in mind the Commission on the Roles and Capabilities of the United States Intelligence Community, the "Aspin-Brown" Commission, which reported March 1, 1996. A rigorous analysis, in my view.

On the other hand, I did chair the Commission on Protecting and Reducing Government Secrecy, a statutory body—I wrote the statute—which reported last March 4. This is a study of the culture of secrecy which, in my view, developed within the United States government over the protracted international crisis of the

twentieth century. Our members included John M. Deutch, then director of Central Intelligence, who, in the process, was hugely instrumental in bringing about the release of the VENONA decryptions involving Soviet espionage in the United States during and after World War II. A unanimous commission called for a statute to establish a legal regime of classification, and a declassification center to deal with that damnable problem. Mr. Heilbrunn writes that my foreword is "beautifully written." I could wish he had read it. It is on the Government Printing Office's World Wide Web page at <<http://www.access.gpo.gov/int>>.

*Daniel Patrick Moynihan*  
*United States Senate*

## Jacob Heilbrunn responds:

I am relieved to learn that Senator Moynihan did not wear a monocle in London. (I am afraid that I did indeed pick up this canard via D'Souza.) But I take comfort in the fact that Moynihan has not challenged my statement that he donned a bowler hat.

As for the CIA: No, I was not thinking of the Aspin-Brown Commission. Moynihan may argue that his commission was not really about reforming the CIA, but it seemed to me that the agency was his main target. And if I was a bit off the mark, Moynihan has only his own eloquence to blame for leading me astray: I attended a dinner at the Council on Foreign Relations for the release of his report, and I vividly recall that Moynihan spoke at length about the CIA's woes and the cult of secrecy.

## OVERWORKED ECONOMISTS

To the Editors:

In their article "Overworked and Underemployed" [March-April 1997], Barry Bluestone and Stephen Rose claim our estimates of the growth of work time are "exaggerated." They also note that critics "challenged Schor's data and pointed to a supposed logical flaw in her argument" and raise questions about Mishel's and Jared Bernstein's findings on increasing hours of work. Bluestone and Rose also, however, reach the same conclusion we did: There has been a growth of both overwork and underemployment. Unfortunately, Bluestone and Rose leave unchallenged the various criticisms of the claim that Americans are working longer.

All of the criticisms Bluestone and Rose mention are based on the claim that the workweek has declined so people cannot possibly be overworked. We would respond in three ways: First, two-thirds of the growth in annual hours of work is from a growth in the number of weeks worked per year by the average worker (from 42 weeks in 1973 to 45 weeks in 1994), a trend uncontested and ignored by the critics. Second, it is incorrect that weekly hours have fallen. The Bureau of Labor Statistics household data on hours worked per week by the average worker show a growth since 1979, reversing the 1948-79 trend toward lower weekly hours. Bluestone and Rose, in contrast, offer payroll data on weekly hours per job of nonsupervisory workers (82 percent of total) to show declining hours. Some of the discrepancy is in the growth of multiple job holding, which lowers the hours per



job (the extra jobs are part-time) but raises the average worker's total hours. There is no reason to believe the payroll data are better than the household data in describing these trends. In fact, Bluestone and Rose's preferred data, the Panel Study of Income Dynamics household survey, show the same growth of annual hours over the 1973–89 period as the data we used.

Third, the growth of involuntary part-timers has imparted an artificial downward bias in the average hours estimates, a key point of Schor's research, but a point that is not picked up in PSID data. We believe this may be the source of Bluestone and Rose's view that Schor's data are "exaggerated" or subject to some "logical flaw." Once we account for the fact that there are many more involuntary part-timers, and that their average hours have fallen dramatically since 1969, the upward trends in hours for the "unconstrained labor force" are far more pronounced. This also accounts for Bluestone and Rose's mistaken belief that Schor's results depend on "new entrants" to the labor force—her data cover only employed persons, and hence no participation effects are included.

It is true that time-diary data, like that which Bluestone and Rose used, can be more accurate indicators of weekly hours. But the samples are not always representative, and they miss the growth in weeks worked per year. Furthermore, if John Robinson is right that the extent of work time overestimation is growing, it is because people who work more overestimate more. Second, the overestimation Robinson finds from 1965 to 1975 is most likely due to the fact that

the 1965 sample oversampled individuals who work long hours. It may also be helpful to look at the bigger picture: Everyone agrees that a majority of working Americans are time squeezed and pressured. We say it's because they have less free time; Robinson believes we only feel more stressed, because there's more we want to do.

One final point: Bluestone and Rose claim that over the last 20 years American workers have not increased their willingness to trade money for time. But according to polling Schor has done, the fraction of the population willing to trade money for time has almost quadrupled since 1985, from 4.5 percent to 19 percent. Readers of "Overworked and Underemployed" might be left with the impression that work hours for either individual workers or families have not risen over the last several decades.

*Larry Mishel  
Economic Policy Institute  
Washington, D.C.*

*Juliet Schor  
Harvard University  
Cambridge, Massachusetts*

**Barry Bluestone and Stephen Rose respond:**

We were a bit surprised to read the letter from our colleagues Larry Mishel and Juliet Schor. The impression they give is that our recent article contained major criticism of their work. While we reviewed their research and the criticisms of it from those who have used other methods to calculate working hours, we found that our analysis, using data from the

Panel Study of Income Dynamics, substantially confirmed the results of their earlier work. We each came up with somewhat different estimates of hours worked, but all of us agree that the increase has been significant.

Mishel and Schor seem to suggest we used Bureau of Labor Statistics establishment data to counter the claim that people were working longer hours or that Schor's estimates of hours were "exaggerated." In fact, just the opposite was the case. We clearly inferred that the BLS data were not appropriate for estimating hours for individuals because an increasing number of people are working multiple jobs and establishment data cannot pick this up. Indeed, in new research we have completed since our *TAP* article, we argue that mainstream economists have a tendency to underestimate the potential supply of labor because they rely on establishment hours reports and official unemployment rate data, which cannot account for much of the increased hours among incumbent workers. This explains why mainstream economists are so mystified by the ability of the American economy to sustain low official unemployment rates without bumping against labor supply constraints that could ignite inflation. Because mainstream economists are looking at the wrong numbers and have failed to recognize the important implications of Schor's and Mishel's research—as well as our corroborating work—they are baffled.

It may be true that the proportion of workers who want to work less has quadrupled to 19 percent. But this means that the overwhelming majority of the work-

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force—more than four out of five workers—have no desire or, more likely, cannot afford to work less. We all complain about overwork but, given stagnating wages, too few of us would take advantage of time off—unless it came with a paycheck.

## HUDDLED MASSES?

To the Editors:

In his article “An Invisible Community: Inside Chicago’s Public Housing” [September–October 1997], Sudhir Venkatesh attacks the comprehensive revitalization strategies of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA). Labeling the Robert Taylor Homes an “oasis of stability,” Mr. Venkatesh argues, in effect, that preserving isolated and dilapidated high-rise developments cordoned off from the rest of the city is good public policy.

We emphatically disagree. HUD and the CHA believe, instead, that creating viable, healthy communities, which contain mixed-income housing, commercial and industrial facilities, job opportunities, schools, parks, and libraries, is the best way to serve lower-income families and the cities and towns where they live.

In light of the scope of public housing redevelopment taking place nationwide, concern over the fate of the current public housing residents is understandable. Mr. Venkatesh’s intimation, however, that HUD intends to demolish all its high-rise housing, displace the current residents, and provide only a few new units to a “better class of poor people” is alarmist and inaccurate. A recent congressional-

ly mandated “viability study” of the CHA’s housing stock indicated that more than one billion dollars in repairs would be necessary to preserve the housing for another 10 to 20 years. This fact—coupled with a CHA-wide vacancy rate of almost 30 percent and the well-documented issues regarding safety and services—makes realistic planning imperative. Far from being a strategy to end subsidized housing, inclusive redevelopment planning is integral to preserving the program. The plans being developed between public housing authorities and residents across the country include a mixture of demolition of obsolete structures, modernization, and new construction—all depending on the individual needs and circumstances of the affected communities.

Mr. Venkatesh also misrepresents HUD and CHA’s revitalization of inner-city communities as a nationwide strategy of displacement and gentrification. On the contrary, redevelopment is opening formerly inaccessible communities to public housing residents. The Cabrini Green revitalization plan, which will make more than 50 acres of privately owned land in one of the city’s most exclusive neighborhoods accessible to public housing families, represents an unprecedented partnership between the CHA and the city of Chicago. More than 700 public housing units will be built in mixed-income developments by private developers committed to community building. All 600 affected families will have the opportunity to remain a part of their community. The CHA has promised that all families will have their choice of a new replacement unit, a Section 8 Housing Certifi-

cate, or another CHA unit. Some 2,000 existing Cabrini Green units will remain and CHA has recently signed contracts with resident organizations to partner with the CHA in managing those units. These are not the elements of a displacement strategy.

Mr. Venkatesh argues that the Section 8 and Scattered Site programs destroy the community supports that exist in public housing and are merely a tactic to disperse the poor. Helping families who choose to move into private housing throughout the city and suburbs is integral to the CHA’s mission to ensure the provision of affordable housing in viable communities for low-income families. Hundreds of public families have used Section 8 certificates to move into neighborhoods with better schools, employment opportunities, and strong social supports. Given Mr. Venkatesh’s own depiction of the distressed social and physical conditions in public housing, the opportunity to move to other communities is an important element of redevelopment planning.

Mr. Venkatesh contends that the key to the success of these redevelopment strategies is the creation of employment opportunities. HUD and the CHA could not agree more strongly. At Cabrini Green, the CHA and the city are contributing several million dollars to the creation of long-term employment opportunities for the residents of the development. At Henry Horner Homes, the development manager, the CHA, and organized labor have partnered in the creation of the Step-Up program, which moves residents directly into skilled trades. The Robert Taylor redevelopment plan

takes advantage of the industrial boom nearby to make jobs available for residents.

Mr. Venkatesh's suggestion that public housing residents have adequate access to transportation, shopping, and other services is a stretch. A resident leader of Robert Taylor recently told the *Chicago Tribune* that the area desperately needs "grocery stores, laundromats, cleaners, restaurants, any type of industry that's going to generate jobs." Both HUD and the CHA make revitalization of the larger community integral to any public housing redevelopment. At Cabrini Green, the city and the CHA are partnering in the complete transformation of the community through the construction of new schools, new commercial facilities, new parks, and a new library. Similarly at Henry Horner Homes, the city, the CHA, and community leaders have partnered in the creation of a one-stop career center, a new library, a new park, improvements to schools, and new retail facilities.

Past history does provide some ground for a lack of faith on the part of residents. Perhaps the best indication, however, of the new CHA's commitment to keeping its promises is made by Mr. Venkatesh himself in his concluding remarks. He refers to the residents of four high-rises along Chicago's south lakefront displaced over ten years ago with the promise that they would receive new housing. Most did not. This month, the first residents will move back into brand-new townhomes in the community they left more than a decade ago.

To his credit, Mr. Venkatesh helps to dispel the stigma associated with public housing and the

people who live there by pointing out that there exists a strong sense of community in public housing today. We wholeheartedly agree that residents of public housing are no different than other city dwellers. They want to work hard, live in peace, and raise their families. Revitalizing distressed inner-city communities and protecting the rights of lower-income citizens are not mutually exclusive. We are proving that in neighborhoods throughout the city of Chicago and across the nation.

*Joseph Shuldiner  
Executive Director  
Chicago Housing Authority  
Chicago, Illinois*

#### **Sudhir Venkatesh responds:**

To its credit, the Chicago Housing Authority under the leadership of Joseph Shuldiner is proceeding with the demolition and redevelopment of large public housing developments in a more responsible manner than previous CHA administrations. But in Mr. Shuldiner's response to my article, one can still discern cause for worry in CHA policy.

Most important, there is a real question about CHA's capacity to house all those tenants who wish to "remain a part of the community." A congressionally mandated "viability study" forces CHA officials to demolish high-rise units within ten years if there is no "reasonable chance" of rehabilitation. As Mr. Shuldiner himself points out, "rehabbing" will cost more than one billion dollars and is therefore effectively precluded. The CHA's own estimates suggest that 18,000 high-rise units have no "reasonable chance" of remaining in existence.

What if all of these tenants wish to remain a part of the community? Current CHA redevelopment strategies will not allow even a modest number of them to do so.

Consider the Cabrini Green plans Mr. Shuldiner describes. He writes that all "600 affected families" can choose to remain in the community. Yet, in the name of mixed-income development, current "revitalization initiatives" limit the number of new housing units that will be allocated for the poorest social class—the category in which more than 90 percent of Cabrini's tenants belong. Alternatively, tenant groups hear reports that "mixed-income" plans will seek to include both "working" and "nonworking" tenants. But more than 90 percent of Cabrini's residents are unemployed—some of them will surely not be accommodated. In short, under the current CHA strategy, it seems fairly clear that no more than 20 to 30 percent of the current Cabrini population can remain living in the Near North Corridor. And, with what looks like the imminent demolition of thousands of additional high-rise units in coming years, more tenants will be eventually forced to leave their developments.

Why the disingenuousness, Mr. Shuldiner? Many CHA high-rise tenants do want to leave; others wish to remain in their housing development; and a third faction wish to live in a nearby neighborhood. Moreover, they understand that they may have to make compromises. Why not admit that some displacement is inevitable and work with the tenant leaders representing these interest groups?

*continued on page 93*



# Devil in the Details

## DRAW, DOMESTIC PARDNER

Idaho Representative Helen Chenoweth has never been a fan of gun control. Nevertheless, her latest foray into the public debate over the issue seems a little bit odd. Chenoweth is the lead sponsor of a bill to repeal the Lautenberg amendment, a 1996 provision that effectively prohibits gun ownership by anyone convicted of a misdemeanor domestic violence offense. The amendment, she claims, violates the Second and Tenth Amendments, and is an *ex post facto* law (because it's retroactive) as well as an unfunded government mandate.

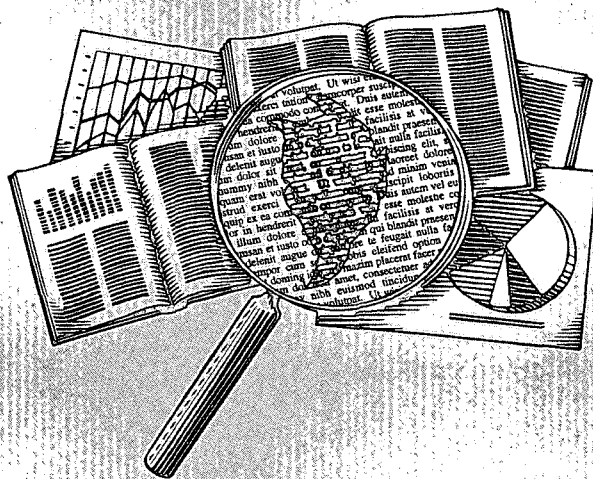
What's more, she says, police sometimes charge both parties in a domestic violence dispute, so the Lautenberg amendment might prevent abused women from defending themselves. According to the Family Violence Prevention Fund, nearly four million women have been abused by their husbands or boyfriends over the past year, and 26 percent of all murdered women are killed by their partners. A mere 3 percent of

murdered men, on the other hand, are killed by their wives or girlfriends. In the spirit of frontier justice, Rep. Chenoweth prefers to keep guns in the hands of abused wives rather than keeping them out of the hands of their abusive husbands. Why does this strike us as less than a fair fight?

## DISORDER IN THE COURT

The past year has seen the revival of an old Republican proposal, the division of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. For the fifth time since 1983, northwestern Republicans have urged that the court, which serves nine western states, be divided in two, arguing that the court is too large and inefficient, and that a division is necessary for the effective administration of justice. Legislation dividing the court passed the Senate in July on a party-line vote, and the issue has been pushed to the top of the agenda.

But there's more to this story. While there may be good administrative reasons for splitting the Ninth Circuit—after all, it serves 50 million people (more than any of the nation's other circuit courts), has a caseload of more than 7,000, and takes an average of 429 days to reach a decision, compared to 315 days on average



nationwide—the bid to split the Ninth Circuit comes in the midst of an all-out Republican assault on “judicial activism” in the federal courts. Conservative congressmen have held up the nominations of many Clinton judicial appointees, called for the impeachment of liberal judges like Thelton Henderson of California, and even proposed a rules change that would give senators a *de facto* veto over judicial nominees for their circuit.

Tellingly, the Ninth Circuit is probably the country's most liberal. Over the past few years, Ninth Circuit judges have ruled against laws banning assisted suicide, upheld the Brady law, thrown out numerous death sentences, and dealt several important blows to the timber industry. Thus when Republican senators argue that the Ninth is dominated by Californians who don't understand their constituents' needs, the reality is that they don't like a court dominated by liberals.

If Republicans were truly concerned about the Ninth Circuit being overburdened with cases,

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wouldn't they try harder to fill its vacancies? At this writing, 9 of the court's 28 seats are vacant, and the Senate has not even begun the process of confirmation for four nominees. The nomination of William Fletcher, a moderate Berkeley law professor and one of the nation's leading experts on federal jurisdiction, has languished since it was sent to the Senate on April 25, 1995. Conservatives have also opposed the nomination of several other Clinton nominees, including Margaret McKeown, a highly regarded expert on intellectual property law (recently derided by Senator John Ashcroft as a "liberal elitist" with "ACLU-marching orders in hand").

A 1994 *Management Review* article, written before the current string of vacancies, praised the Ninth Circuit as "a finely tuned watch" and mentioned that other courts were trying to model themselves after it. Should we really be surprised that, with one-third of its seats vacant, the Ninth Circuit is now experiencing delays?

## A BETTER CLASS OF CANNIBAL

After the 1994 elections swept a Republican majority into office, Congress made a big deal about subjecting itself to all the laws it imposes on others. What are we to make, then, of Democratic Representative John P. Murtha's proposed amendment to the House's Justice Department spending bill for fiscal year 1998? The Pennsylvania congressman would reimburse legal fees to members of Congress or to House or Senate employees

unsuccessfully prosecuted by the Justice Department on charges pertaining to their official duties.

Given that hardly a day goes by without some congressman calling for a special prosecutor or the Justice Department to look into the misdeeds of a Clinton administration official, it is ironic that supporters of the amendment have touted the measure as an assertion of "the independence of Congress" and a remedy to Washington's "cannibalistic" culture.

The amendment would create a privileged class of government employees—those fortunate enough to work on Capitol Hill. So congressmen and their staffs, uniquely, would be sheltered from Washington's cannibalistic culture—leaving them free to cannibalize everybody else. So much for Congress subjecting itself to the laws of the land.

## FAMILY VALUES PACKAGE

The *American Spectator* makes great sport of President Clinton's alleged peccadilloes. The *Spectator* also finds reliable virtue in the free market. How does the *Spectator* blend market values and family values? Try its back-page classifieds. You can Meet Women World-Wide through the Cherry Blossoms service, or find Lovely Eastern European Ladies through Club Prima. Is this a philosophical statement about the superiority of arranged marriages, or perhaps a principled brief for open immigration? Maybe it's just the way



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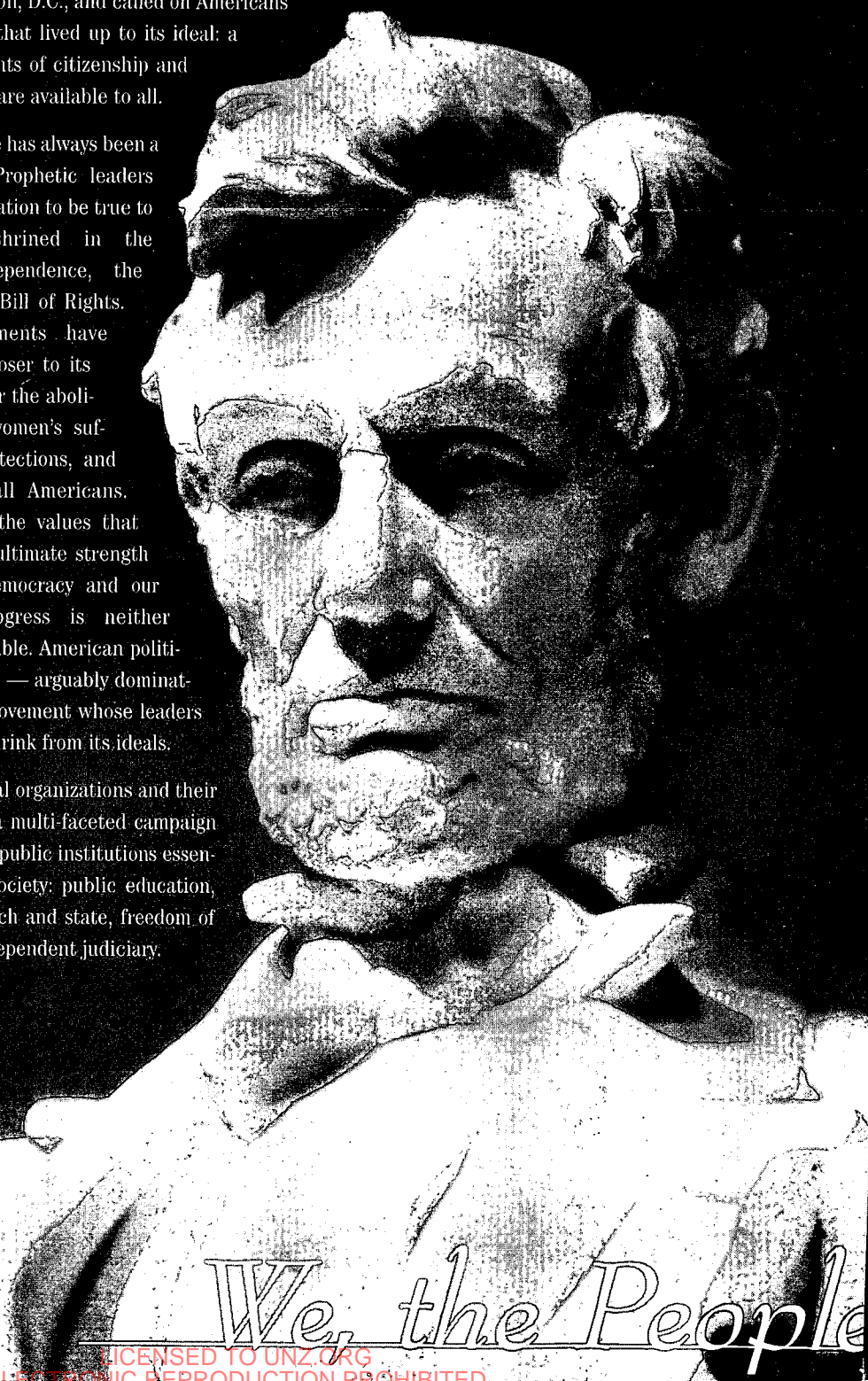
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**A**braham Lincoln stood at the Gettysburg battlefield and reminded Americans that they were involved in a struggle over the meaning and future of a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to equality. One hundred years later, Martin Luther King, Jr., stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., and called on Americans to work for a nation that lived up to its ideal: a society where the rights of citizenship and access to opportunity are available to all.

The American promise has always been a work in progress. Prophetic leaders have challenged the nation to be true to the principles enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. Great social movements have moved the country closer to its promise by working for the abolition of slavery, for women's suffrage, for worker protections, and for civil rights for all Americans. Their successes and the values that guided them are the ultimate strength and power of our democracy and our economy. But progress is neither inevitable nor irreversible. American political life is being shaped — arguably dominated — by a political movement whose leaders would have America shrink from its ideals.

Religious Right political organizations and their allies are engaged in a multi-faceted campaign against the values and public institutions essential to a democratic society: public education, the separation of church and state, freedom of expression, and an independent judiciary.

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**People For the American Way** and its advocacy affiliate, the **People For the American Way Action Fund**, were founded to promote and defend the values of the American Way: fairness, equality, opportunity, individual liberty, and tolerance of difference. We are engaged in research on the strategies and tactics of the right wing, creative policy development, legal and political advocacy, and grassroots political organizing. Our aim is to enlist Americans who share our values and will work with us to bring about changes in public opinion and public policy.

Over the next several months we plan to lead a public discussion about the essentials of democracy and the threats posed by the Religious Right political movement. Expect to hear from us in the following areas:

**Public Education:** Vouchers for private and religious schools and other elements of the Right's campaign against public education threaten our schools and schoolchildren with abandonment. We are working to build a national commitment to strengthening public education and the opportunity it represents for future generations of Americans.

**Religious Liberty:** Vouchers, constitutional amendments, and assaults on

the judiciary are all elements of the Religious Right's campaign to dismantle separation of church and state, a cornerstone of religious liberty in America.

**Constitutional Protections:** The agenda of right-wing political leaders includes attacks on freedom of expression, anti-discrimination measures, reproductive rights, basic civil rights for gay and lesbian Americans, and on the independent judiciary.

Right-wing efforts in these areas all hold dangers for the future of our democratic society, and all require a determined response.

As a reader of *The American Prospect* you know the power of imagination and ideas. But you also know that imagination and ideas shared among thoughtful individuals will not bring about a change in our political culture unless they are part of a larger effort. Religious Right organizations and their allies in Congress, state legislatures, and conservative think tanks have not relied purely on the power of ideas to shift American political discourse sharply to the right. They have built power steadily and strategically, using the financial muscle of right-wing foundations to construct an integrated political movement encompassing college stu-

dents and faculty; state and national think tanks; legal advocacy organizations; print and broadcast media; and grassroots political organizing and electoral campaigns.

People For the American Way analyzed this strategy last year in *Buying a Movement*. In recent months we have published *Hostile Climate*, documenting institutional anti-gay bigotry and discrimination state-by-state; we have testified before congressional hearings on a proposed constitutional amendment that would undermine religious liberty and on the Right's campaign against an independent judiciary; and we have released *A Right Wing and a Prayer*, an analysis of the Religious Right's assault on public education in America. The Action Fund is going head-to-head with Religious Right activists in the political arena, from Capitol Hill to local school board races.

People For the American Way, the Action Fund, and their 300,000 members and activists are actively challenging the Religious Right's vision of America and its efforts to make that vision a reality for all of us. We hope you will share your ideas, your energy, and your resources with us.

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# DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY

BY PAUL STARR

**T**he 1994 election devastated the self-confidence of the Democratic Party, and 1996 only partially restored it. After narrowly escaping the “Republican revolution,” many Democrats have lowered their expectations and become resigned to the prospect of center-right government. And now President Clinton’s budget and tax deal with the Republicans in Congress has left his own party without a clear long-term agenda or any resources for new initiatives. Especially on the party’s liberal side, Democrats are thoroughly demoralized, gloomy about the prospects for recovering control of Congress in 1998 and reviving momentum on what at least used to be the party’s distinctive progressive concerns.

Skepticism about progressive possibilities does not simply reflect the latest voting returns, opinion polls, or signals from the White House. Even sympathetic observers don’t see why the underlying trends in American society and politics should return the Democrats, much less liberals, to a majority position. The conventional wisdom is that the Republican Party has become the “sun” and the Democratic Party merely the reflecting “moon” of American politics—to use a metaphor first suggested by Samuel Lubell in 1954, when the parties seemed to occupy the opposite roles. Democrats themselves do not have a believable narrative of the future that explains how and why they can become a majority party again. But their long-term prospects may not be as dire as they look. Although my purpose here is not to predict a new majority, I want to suggest why certain social and economic trends over the next 30 years could help Democrats to achieve it—if they can develop the ideas, strategies, and organization to capitalize on the opportunities that these trends represent.

Of course, new majorities are rare, while dreams and theories of new majorities are more common—hence mostly illusory. In recent decades, two theories of new political majorities have proved, if not exactly correct, at least substantially valid. Both were based not merely on a hope, a prayer, or a debatable historical lesson, but on long-term changes in American society

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## The Democrats' long-term prospects are better than their current disarray suggests.

the Sunbelt presaged a continuing shift of power toward the most reliably conservative region of the country. The analytical force of the book came from Phillips's command of patterns of ethnic settlement and county-level voting since the Civil War. Putting those data together with the growth of the Sunbelt, he correctly anticipated the sources of the Republican ascendancy that would make Ronald Reagan President and Newt Gingrich Speaker of the House. That ascendancy did not happen automatically; the Republican

that could be the rational basis of new political strategies.

The first was the theory famously proposed in 1969 by Kevin Phillips in what remains the single most brilliant recent work of political forecasting, *The Emerging Republican Majority*. Published when Republicans were far outnumbered in Congress and had just barely won the presidency after losing seven of the nine previous races, the book should ironically be an inspiration as well as a benchmark for Democrats today. Much of the analysis still stands up a quarter of a century later, even though the author's own views

have evolved.

Phillips's original new majority formula was one part political realignment, one part geodemographic transition: The Democratic Party's embrace of black interests had opened the South to the Republicans, while rapid economic and population growth in



Party drew new leadership from the South and West and altered its policies to take strategic advantage of the opening that Democrats had provided.

The second theory of a new majority, also originating in the late 1960s, was the conception of the New Politics or new liberalism that emphasized such issues as civil rights, consumer protection, broader political participation, openness in government, feminism, and the environment instead of traditional lunch-bucket concerns. The immediate impetus for this vision of a new majority, including the young, minorities, and women, was of course the wave of political energy set in motion by the Vietnam War. But this strategy also built on a long-run trend: Surveys from the 1950s to the 1970s show that Americans did become more liberal on such issues as race, the role of women, sexual behavior, and the environment (though not on economics, taxes, or crime) in a historic shift of opinion that has not been reversed. The new liberalism also took advantage of the opening that the Republicans' Sunbelt strategy was giving Democrats in other regions. And while many analysts now hold this version of liberalism responsible for the decline of the Democratic Party, it provided new vitality (particularly in the form of hard-working, highly committed candidates) and helped Democrats keep control of Congress and state legislatures for another quarter century after the 1968 election and Phillips's forecast, for a total run of 62 years, about twice the duration of typical party regimes.

**B**ut how can these two theories, with opposite implications, have both been right? As a result of the trends that they identified and strategies that they suggested, the parties have reached a position of rough parity in electoral strength, each with the capacity to form a new majority—that is, a majority different from the one it previously assembled. Republicans can now usually count on majorities among men, Democrats on majorities among women. Republicans win majorities among whites; Democrats can sometimes assemble majorities from whites and other groups combined. The parties have exchanged regional bases

with the South trending toward Republicans, New England toward Democrats. The rough parity between the parties has produced a divided federal government in 22 of the past 28 years. In 1996 the total vote for the House of Representatives was split almost evenly—49 percent for the Republicans, 48.7 percent for Democrats. The Republicans maintained control primarily because of the way in which the votes were distributed; they won the overwhelming majority of close races, while Democratic votes were clustered in districts where they won by lopsided margins. Even so, the Republican House majority in 1997 is the smallest in four decades.

Rough parity in electoral strength does not, however, mean parity in all respects. Rising to parity creates a different sense of direction from falling to the same point. Some years ago, after Harvard scored

two touchdowns in the final minutes of the Harvard-Yale game, the *Harvard Crimson* ran a headline: "Harvard Beats Yale, 24-24." Like Yale, the Democrats seem to have been losing tie games. While many observers have talked of party decline and "de-alignment" as if they afflicted both parties equally, the changes have been asymmetrical, as my colleague Robert Kuttner per-

suasively argued a decade ago in his book *The Life of the Party*. It's the Democrats whose machinery has deteriorated most (the party as organization) and who have lost most in popular self-identification (the party in the electorate). Since 1994, Democrats have also surrendered much of their own agenda to stay politically competitive. They have had fewer resources and run into more trouble (and scandal) in scrambling to obtain them.

Financial scandals have decimated the leading parties of Italy and Japan in recent years, and they could similarly do severe damage to the Democrats in the wake of the 1996 campaign (if only by chilling donors in a system still dependent on private money). Yet if we look to the long term, there are signs more favorable to the Democrats: demographic growth among groups of voters with Democratic affinities; economic trends likely to emphasize the importance of issues identified with the Democratic Party; historical shifts as Democrats finally shed some of the burdens they have carried since the 1960s. These developments

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pose two related strategic and intellectual challenges: Are the Democrats capable of capitalizing on these emerging tendencies? And in the face of scandals and cynicism, can they revive themselves not just as a party but as a cause?

### FLIPPING THE SUNBELT

The 1996 presidential election diverged in several ways from the patterns of political support that Phillips had predicted in 1969. Clinton did better, for example, among Catholics and in the Midwest. But, most remarkably, he won a series of states across the southern rim of the United States—Florida, Louisiana, Arizona, New Mexico, and California—that were supposed to be anchors of the new Republican majority. What makes these results especially significant is that, except in Louisiana, Clinton and other Democrats received critical support from two groups whose numbers will increase dramatically in coming years—Hispanics and the elderly. Continued Democratic support from these groups certainly isn't guaranteed, but their growing numbers provide a historic opportunity for a flip of the lower, "Latinized" Sunbelt back to the Democrats.

Although 1996 was not generally a realigning election, it may have had something of that character for Hispanic voters. Realigning elections characteristically see both an increase in turnout and a swing in party support, and among Hispanics both took place in 1996. Nationally, the Hispanic vote rose an estimated 22 percent over 1992, and Hispanics cast 72 percent of their votes for Clinton, up from 55 percent four years earlier. (These and all other exit poll data for 1996 that I cite come from the Voter News Service exit poll; some of the figures were generated from the data on the CNN/All Politics site on the World Wide Web.) In what may be a signal of future bloc voting, 78 percent of Hispanics under age 30 voted for Clinton. In Arizona, which no Democrat had won since 1948, Hispanics put Clinton over the top with 81 percent of their votes, as they did in New Mexico, where Clinton "merely" won 66 percent of Hispanics. Perhaps the single most electrifying results were in California, where Loretta Sanchez upset Robert Dornan in a

congressional race in what used to be the conservative bastion of Orange County, and where the Democrats retook control of the state assembly and chose a Hispanic, Cruz Bustamente, as the new Speaker. Clinton won 75 percent of the California Hispanic vote; he even won half of the Hispanic vote in Florida despite long-time Republican strength among Cubans.

According to Census Bureau projections, Hispanics will represent an astounding 44 percent of net population growth in the United States through 2025. The source of this growth is not only continuing immigration, but also Hispanics' relative youth and high fertility rate. The median age of Hispanics is 26, compared to 35 for the overall U.S. population; thus even if Hispanic women had children at the same rate as non-Hispanics, the Hispanic population would grow more rapidly. Census projections for 2025 show Hispanics growing to 18 percent of the population in the United States as a whole, but to 32 percent in Arizona, 38 percent in Texas, and at least 43 percent in California.

Moreover, among Hispanics, the slowest growing group is the most Republican, the Cubans, with a median age of 41, while the most rapidly growing groups are those from Mexico and Central America, who tend to be more Democratic. Thus the internal dynamics of the Hispanic population augur stronger Democratic leanings.

To be sure, several things could upset these projections. The Hispanic population will be smaller if immigration is sharply reduced or if Hispanic fertility rates converge more rapidly with the general population than the Census assumes. Some critics, such as the columnist and population watcher Ben Wattenberg, argue that Census forecasts of fertility are generally too high. But even if Wattenberg is right, non-Hispanic fertility rates might fall in parallel with the Hispanic fertility rate, leaving as large a differential. And tighter immigration laws might not halt the growth of the Hispanic population if, as Douglas Massey, a sociologist at the University of Pennsylvania, argues, greater economic integration between the United States and Mexico (and other Latin American countries) increases the flow of people along with goods regardless of immigration laws.

Hispanics also might not vote in numbers that reflect their share of the population. Today Hispan-

The Democratic margin among the elderly is related to the gender gap.

ics represent a much smaller percentage of the electorate than of total population because of their low median age, the high proportion of noncitizens, and low voter turnout. Nationally, Hispanics made up 10.5 percent of the population in 1996 but only 4 percent of the electorate; as they rise to 18 percent of the population, they have the potential to double or triple their share of the vote. Whether they will close the gap in turnout with other groups is impossible to say; the spurt in 1996 could turn out to be a special case. But as their median age increases and a larger proportion become citizens because they have naturalized or were born here, the Hispanics' share of the electorate should grow faster than their share of the population.

The Hispanic turn toward the Democrats in 1996 could also prove ephemeral. Republicans might increasingly appeal to Hispanics on the basis of conservative cultural values or by running more Hispanic candidates, and Hispanics themselves might become more conservative as they advance socioeconomically. The history of other immigrant groups suggests, however, that early political identifications tend to be highly persistent; Irish Americans, for example, have maintained their identification with the Democratic Party long after its original basis disappeared. Some writers have properly cautioned that Hispanics are not as reliably Democratic or liberal as African Americans. But African-American voting patterns (roughly 90 percent Democratic) aren't a reasonable standard. Not even Christian fundamentalists vote Republican at that rate.

Of course, the Hispanic preference for Democrats in 1996 was well above prior levels because of the alarm created among Hispanics by Proposition 187 in California, the congressional cutoff of welfare benefits and other services to legal immigrants, and Republican support for making English the exclusive language of public business. Yet even if Republicans soften their stands, there is no mistaking which party will remain the home of both nativist sentiment and opposition to social programs that benefit groups with large numbers of poor working families. Family incomes among Hispanics, again except for the Cubans, continue to lag far behind those of non-Hispanic whites. Given

recent trends toward growing income inequality and relatively slim gains among low-wage workers, Hispanics seem likely to remain predominantly working-class in orientation and more favorable to the party that supports increases in the minimum wage and earned income tax credit and is more closely identified with unions, expanded educational opportunities, and broader access to health care.

#### AGE AND THE GENDER GAP

Nationally, voters over age 65 favored Clinton over Dole by 51 percent to 42 percent in 1996. Although this nine-point margin was just above the average for all voters, it was significantly higher than among voters between the ages of 50 and 64, who split for Clin-

ton by only 46 percent to 44 percent. Except for the elderly, age was positively correlated with voting Republican; the deviation from this pattern among the over-65 voters suggests some distinctive influence affecting those in retirement. The preferences of the elderly particularly mattered in Florida, where they favored Clinton by 56 percent to 40 percent and

tipped the state to him, giving Democrats their first win in a presidential race in Florida since 1976.

In 1996, the elderly made up about 13 percent of the national population and 16 percent of voters; in 2025, they will make up one out of five Americans and perhaps about one-fourth of the electorate. As with Hispanics, the growing elderly population in coming years will be regionally concentrated; Census projections for 2025 show the elderly rising from 19 percent to 26 percent of Floridians (and probably close to a third of voters). The regional concentration of Hispanic and elderly voters has particular relevance to presidential elections. During the 1980s, some observers spoke of a Republican lock on the Electoral College in large part because the party's base in presidential elections seemed to include California, Texas, and Florida. By 2025, these states will be the nation's three most populous, and if the concentration of Hispanic and elderly voters gives Democrats an edge in those states as well as in traditionally Democratic New York (the fourth most populous state in 2025), Democratic candidates may begin presidential races with a big electoral college advantage.

**I**n 1996, the youngest voters, not the elderly, gave Clinton the strongest support.



Compared to the Democratic leanings of Hispanics, however, those of the elderly are much weaker to begin with and therefore more uncertain in the future. One key question here is whether their voting patterns mainly reflect formative political experiences earlier in life, their current economic interests (such as Social Security), or demographic factors, such as differences in mortality rates. Today's elderly came of age during the middle decades of the century when there were high levels of unionization and Democratic partisan identification. The elderly of 2025 will be drawn mainly from today's middle aged—the most Republican cohorts in 1996—who formed their views when unions and Democratic identification were declining. If such generational effects predominate, we might expect a shift among the elderly toward more conservative voting.

Some evidence does suggest generational differences between today's elderly and those just behind them, but the data from the 1996 presidential race are ambiguous.

The generational effects should apply no less to men than to women, but men 65 and older gave Clinton about the same proportion of their votes (44 percent) as did men between the ages of 50 and 64. Clinton's wider margin among the elderly than among the 50- to 64-year-olds was due entirely to a four-point-wider edge among elderly women and to the larger proportion of women among the elderly population because of their lower mortality rates. These patterns suggest that, at least in 1996, the Democratic margin among the elderly was related to the gender gap.

Voting patterns among women under age 65, particularly differences by marital status, may offer a clue to future trends. Among the married middle aged, there was no gender gap in presidential voting; married 50- to 64-year-old women voted for Dole by 51 percent to only 42 percent for Clinton, much as their husbands did. In contrast, unmarried 50- to 64-year-old women favored Clinton by 63 to 31 percent, displaying the same voting preferences as younger unmarried women, more than 60 percent of whom also voted for Clinton. Single women might be more partial to Democrats for a variety of reasons: more experience in the workforce, higher

probability of depending on government programs, and—not least of all—less influence by more conservative men.

As the 50- to 64-year-old cohort ages, the proportion of women will increase, and more of these women will become single through divorce or widowhood (though the latter may have less impact on political attitudes). On the basis of these demographic factors alone, the elderly of 2025 will probably become more Democratic than they were in middle age.

And as the 50- to 64-year-old cohort retires, Social Security and Medicare should also become more salient issues for them. But how they construe their interests as beneficiaries may depend on

whether those programs continue to exist in their current form. Extensive means testing, for example, could remove the more affluent elderly from the program and turn them into opponents of more generous benefits. Similarly, privatization of Social Security

could expand the number of the elderly who see themselves as investors and reduce the number who see themselves as beneficiaries. This is precisely the objective of many who favor means testing and privatization. And some version of these changes may well result from the bipartisan reform of Social Security and Medicare that Clinton is now calling for. Even with some means testing and partial privatization, however, the most likely outcome is that the elderly will remain the age group most dependent on public social protection—policies historically identified with the Democratic Party.

## A NEW DEMOCRATIC GENERATION

In 1996, the age group that supported Clinton and the Democrats most strongly was actually not the elderly, but the youngest voters. Those between the ages of 18 and 29 favored Clinton by 53 percent to 34 percent; first-time voters gave him an even higher margin, 58 percent to 40 percent; and, according to the pollster Stanley Greenberg, surveys of high school students showed still stronger support. This is a reversal from the pattern in the 1980s, when the young were more Republican; as Reagan tutored new voters then, so Clinton and Gore may

The same demographic trends that might benefit Democrats could also divide them.

be doing in the 1990s. No doubt Dole's age cost the Republican ticket support among the young, a factor unlikely to be repeated. Clinton also did well among the young because of demographic characteristics, such as low income and unmarried status, that will become less pronounced as these young voters age.

But the Democratic leanings of the young may also herald a historical shift. Beginning in the late 1960s, Republicans were able to paint Democrats as being weak on crime, morality, and national defense and to win over much of their traditional white working- and middle-class base. Clinton's ability to reclaim these voters may stem not only from his personal success in reframing the social issues, but also from the diminishing resonance of appeals rooted in the experiences of the 1960s and 1970s. The fading power of the past may be showing up first among younger voters, who have no memory of those years. And as time lifts that onus from the Democrats, the Christian right is creating new burdens of the opposite kind for Republicans.

The swing among young voters may also be connected to economic issues that work in favor of

Democrats. Stagnant earnings and cutbacks in fringe benefits have acutely affected workers in their twenties. New jobs, particularly in small firms and the service sector, often do not carry the health insurance and pensions, much less job security, that were long part of the standard employment package. If younger workers and their families are going to receive health coverage and other benefits, they are almost certainly going to need government's help, either directly in public programs or indirectly in employer mandates. The Democratic Party is the only political vehicle available for such demands.

#### FROM DEMOGRAPHY TO POLITICS

Democrats certainly cannot take Hispanics, the elderly, the young, or any other group for granted. The trends only open up possibilities. Some of the trends even threaten to produce cleavages among the very groups that Democrats seek to unite. The aging of the population brings higher costs for Social Security and Medicare, but because total spending will likely be constrained, the politics of the budget could turn even uglier than in the

## Can the Democrats Become a Cause?

**W**hile the Democrats cannot take any constituencies for granted, neither can those groups assume the Democratic Party will be able to deliver when they need it. During the heyday of the New Deal coalition and even during its subsequent New Politics permutation, liberals and progressives regarded the Democratic Party as the arena for pursuing their aims. They created new movements largely in the hope that the Democrats would respond to them. For the past several decades, however, many activists have been not merely ambivalent about the Democratic Party but positively contemptuous of it. This dysfunctional relationship is another

example of the asymmetry between the major parties. The dominant conservative groups, publications, and writers have no doubt that the Republican Party is their vehicle, but liberals are far less sure the Democratic Party is theirs.

The prospects for Democratic Party renewal depend on the repair of its relationships with the sundry movements that make up its base of politically active support. Party-movement relations fall into a number of general types, depending on whether a movement is inside or outside the party, whether its aim is to change or support the party (or both), and how closely tied the movement may be to particular candidates or issues.

External movements include the following types:

- loose partnerships, where the movement and party are independent but generally allied with one another, as has been the case, for example, with labor unions and the Democrats and where the movement both applies pressure and offers support;

- relationships where the party is the directing force and the movement its instrument, as in the case of the Republican Party and the Christian Coalition; and

- third-party fusionists, where an independent party, such as the New Party or New York's Liberal Party, tries to achieve influence on a major party by threatening to with-

past—in the nightmare scenario, into a civil war of the welfare state with older whites on one side and younger Hispanics and blacks on the other. Support for public education has already eroded because of the disparity in racial and ethnic background between urban school children and taxpayers; given the rising share of Hispanics in the schools, white support for public education may erode even more. The growth of the Hispanic population may also further arouse among whites anxieties already evident in the vote for Proposition 187 and the English-only movement. Thus, the same demographic trends that might benefit Democrats could also divide them.

To maintain support among these and other groups, however, Democrats do not need to be single-minded advocates for interests narrowly conceived; they have to be the responsible guardians for legitimate interests, anchored in broadly shared values. Democrats need to make clear their fundamental concern for immigrants by strongly defending their civil rights and opposing the English-only movement, but they should be wary of supporting

high volumes of legal immigration and thereby undercutting the economic position of low-wage workers. Democrats ought to be clear about protecting the integrity of social insurance programs and, for that very reason, be willing to compromise on such measures as raising the age of eligibility for Social Security; the current and soon-to-be elderly will likely accept a marginal reduction in benefits in exchange for the assured longevity and solvency of the programs. Democrats should similarly support expanded educational opportunities, a living wage, and other policies that benefit young workers and their families, but they do not need to develop separate programs that exacerbate racial and generational cleavages.

In 1996, the Republicans drove the elderly and Hispanics toward the Democratic Party by supporting measures inimical to their interests, and they alienated the young with a candidate who seemed to belong to another era; Republicans are unlikely to keep repeating the same mistake. But what happened in 1996 does reflect more than a casual Republican impulse. The conservative antag-

hold its support and run alternate candidates.

Internal movements include:

- candidate-centered movements inside parties, such as the McGovern or Buchanan campaigns;

- other movements inside parties that transcend particular candidates, where the aim is to change the direction of the party, such as the Democratic reform clubs of the 1950s or the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) today; and

- parties themselves as movements.

More than one of these possibilities might enable the Democrats to revive their base of support. The external movement models, however, suffer from the long-term decline of groups

that might be the source of renewal. Many have lost membership or become little more than hollow shells—direct-mail organizations without much activist base at all. If the unions, women's groups, and environmentalists—to take three leading examples—call people to politics, it's not clear how many will come. Third-party splinter movements are unlikely to make any serious challenge themselves but could shave off enough votes to give Republicans victories in close races.

Among the organizations that could serve as instruments of renewal, one possibility is the Democratic Party itself. The party extends across the nation into virtually every county and town; its local,

county, and state organizations—perhaps pale replicas of their former selves—still represent the most extensive political structure available. The myriad local boards and councils that populate the landscape of American government remain, a century and a half after de Tocqueville, the single best schoolhouse of democratic politics. The image of the reformer as outsider is obsolete; in the aftermath of the party reforms of the 1970s, the relevant figure is, to use Robert Kuttner's phrase, "the reformer as regular." If Democrats are to fashion a new majority, they may find that their own dormant organization has to be the means of revival.

—P.S.



onism to government is likely to keep threatening those who need it. While the elderly depend on social insurance programs, Hispanics and African Americans depend on public spending for education and other social services because they are disproportionately young and poor. The other demographic groups that supported Clinton—unmarried women of all ages and young men and women—tend to face more economic insecurity and have more need of government than older men and middle-aged married women do. The core of the Democrats' emerging majority consists, as it has since the New Deal, of the groups that are struggling hardest to take care of themselves and their families. Helping them realize that aspiration ought to be central to the purposes of the Democratic Party. Democrats should appeal to these groups not merely because they make up a new majority, but because their aspirations are a just and necessary cause.

#### WHICH MAJORITY? WHOSE STORY?

Whether the Democratic Party itself can become a cause for the movements historically allied with it is an open question [see "Can the Democrats Become a Cause?" page 24]. Democrats are divided about what kind of cause the party represents, and each of the competing factions has its own theory of a new majority. On the left, populist-progressives see a "sleeping majority" that requires stirring nonvoters from their political slumber, and on the right, New Democrats see a new information-age centrist majority that includes independents and moderate Republicans allied with moderate Democrats.

The difficulty with the populist strategy is arousing enough nonvoters to win elections; people who tune out politics are inherently hard to reach. A hard-edged populism may also inadvertently mobilize opponents as well as supporters and thus have a negligible or even counterproductive impact. As a short-term proposition, the New Democrats' approach is more likely to succeed. Just as it is easi-

er to sell a new brand to those who have bought another brand of the same product than to people who haven't bought any, so it is easier to sell a candidate or reformed image of a party to independents and moderates who vote than to nonvoters.

But while attracting middle-class independents and Republicans requires narrowing and blurring the differences between the parties, activating low-income nonvoters could create an electorate more friendly to progressive ideas. In the long run, Democrats would be better off with an expanded electorate in which the median voter was closer to their position than with a smaller electorate in which they moved closer to Republicans—better off because even if they chose to make tactical moves toward the center, the electorate would be weighted further to their side. The

populist approach would also be more likely to maximize the effect of the demographic trends favorable to Democrats. The growing Hispanic population turned out to vote in larger numbers in 1996, but it still lagged far behind the rest of the country. A politics addressing the needs of low-income workers may bring more of them into the electorate. Similarly, an inclusive, progressive approach to education and living standards is more likely to engage young people. The long-term interest of Democrats is to invest in a broader electorate and to develop ideas and networks of organization that connect with the currently disengaged.

The New Democrats, however, have not articulated a program that addresses, much less stirs, the politically disengaged and economically insecure. The vision of America favored by the Democratic Leadership Council and its Progressive Policy Institute highlights the benefits of the information revolution and global economy but downplays the losses to those least capable of taking advantage of them. Like Gingrich, some New Democrats have accepted the view derived from Alvin Toffler that the United States is entering a new technological era that dictates "demassification" of large institutions, including "big public systems." In line with that view, they have supported partial privatization of Social Security, Medicare, and public education.

**A**s a short-term proposition, the New Democrats' approach is more likely to succeed. But in the long run, Democrats would be better off with an expanded electorate.

But why the information revolution should favor privatizing these services is obscure. What is clear is that privatization would aggravate inequalities in these spheres and undermine the already depleted sense of common social obligation in America. These policies threaten to alienate groups vital to a new majority, drive a wedge through the Democratic Party, and give conservatives the necessary margin (and cover) to enact their agenda.

To their credit, the New Democrats and President Clinton have helped to reconstitute the moral authority of the Democratic Party by redefining the political middle ground on the social issues, such as crime and "family values," that hurt the party badly in recent decades. The New Democrats' "tolerant traditionalism," as Bill Galston calls it, has more popular support than either the conservatives' intolerant traditionalism and what is perceived to be (and unfortunately sometimes is) the indiscriminate post-modernism of the left. Although often presented as a repudiation of liberalism, the New Democrats' views are not especially conservative on the issues championed by the "new liberalism" of the 1960s—civil rights, the role of women, environmentalism, openness in government. The divisions inflamed by the Vietnam War have now faded. However much they may vex each other, the right and left of the Democratic Party are much closer than they were during the long period when southern Democrats were bitterly opposed to the national party.

Each side brings valuable assets to the task of building a new majority. Liberals and progressives are vital to party renewal because the progressive project has the greater capacity to inspire commitment to the party as a cause and expand its reach across the electorate and among nonvoters. Liberals are unlikely to make up a majority in the general population, but like conservatives among the Republicans, they can realistically aspire to be a majority within America's majority party. Managing this role requires a sense of both strengths and limitations. Liberals and populist-progressives have a right to insist on their core role in setting the party's agenda. But their influence will often be less than their share of party activists might appear to warrant because moderate voters (and, alas, donors) will continue to provide the additional votes and resources needed to win general elections. If the Democratic Party is to build a new majority, it will need both its liberal and New Democrat wings. The party won't fly without them both.□

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# CAN LIBERALS TELL A CREDIBLE STORY?

BY JEFF FAUX

Political debate is a contest between competing stories about, as supply-sider Jude Wanniski once neatly put it, “how the world works.” Today, America lacks serious political debate because Democrats are still substantially trapped in Ronald Reagan’s narrative—the morality play of the Individual against the Collectivist State, in which virtue is identified with wealth, efficiency with the unregulated market, and freedom with the opportunity to get rich.

Bill Clinton claims he is telling a new story—a centrist compromise that deregulates the market and shrinks government to spur greater economic growth, and then, through education and the celebration of self-help, broadens opportunities to enjoy the fruits of that growth. Policy insiders can still read the differences between the Clinton and Reagan stories. But to most Americans, Clinton’s story line is muddled, its characterizations weak (nothing to match Reagan’s welfare queens, power-grabbing bureaucrats, or hypocritical intellectuals secretly lusting after business wealth), and the practical moral of his tale is not much different.

Assume you are a 50-year-old worker, laid off from the last decent-paying job you think you’ll ever have; or a single mother making \$7 an hour when it costs \$10 an hour to live; or a college graduate five years out of school and still struggling with loan payments. You want to know why you are having such a hard time when the economy is said to be booming. So you listen when you turn the channel and see Newt Gingrich telling an updated version of Reagan’s story.

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It goes something like this:

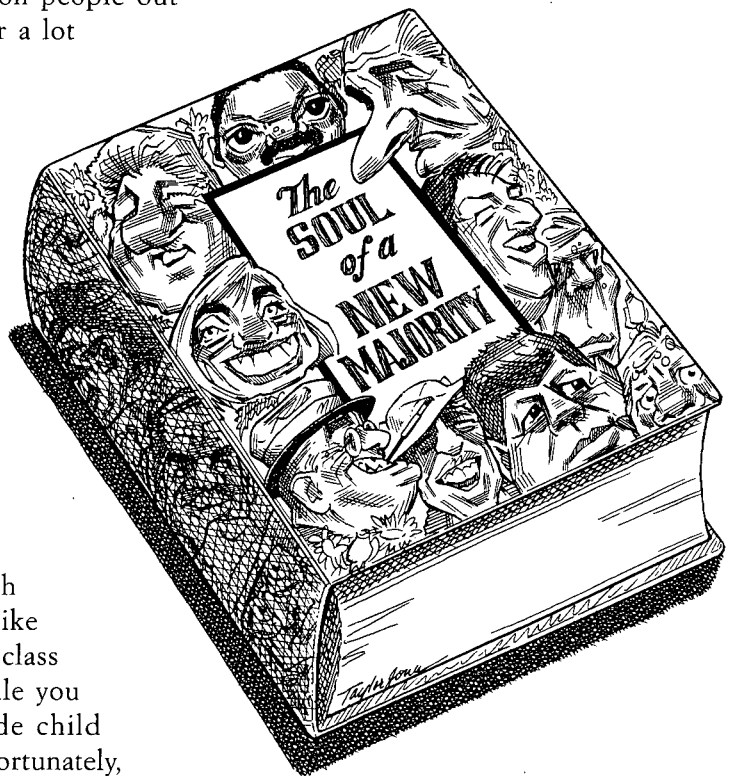
We are entering the Information Age—a time of change equivalent to the shift from the Agricultural to the Industrial Age. The resulting deregulated global economy is bringing freedom and democracy to the rest of the world, and technological wonders to America. But if you want to enjoy it, you have to compete against about six billion people out there, most of whom will work for a lot less than you will.

The price of labor is set in South China. If you want to live seven times better, you have to be seven times more efficient. You should get all the technical training you can get, pack a computer on your back, and get out there and compete. If you're a woman, you ought to think about getting married. As for the government, the best it can do is cut your taxes so you have more resources to compete with. You are on your own.

Not much comfort there, so you turn the channel to Bill Clinton:

We are entering the Information Age. It is a time of change equivalent to the shift from an agricultural to an industrial-based society. The resulting deregulated global economy is bringing freedom and democracy to the rest of the world, and technological wonders to America. But if you want to enjoy it, you have to compete against about six billion people out there, most of whom will work for a lot less than you will.

What you earn will depend on what you learn. You should get all the technical training you can get, pack a computer on your back, and get out there and compete. But we are Democrats. We believe that government can help those who deserve to be helped. Unfortunately, the government has this big deficit; we have to pay off the huge debts run up by Ronald Reagan. So we don't have very much money. And although we'd really like to, we can't really give you world-class skill training, or help you live while you are being re-educated. Or provide child care, or secure health care. So, unfortunately, you are mostly on your own.



## DEMOCRATS AS BIT PLAYERS

As long as they remain trapped in Reagan's story, Democrats will be the supporting players in America's historical drama. Bill Clinton has demonstrated that Democrats without a story of their own can edit the Reaganite drama a bit, soften the insensitive dialogue, and tone down some of the socially violent scenes. But, however reluctantly, they are forced to move the conservative plot forward to its climactic scene—the triumphant return of Social Darwinism.

The problem is not just in the White House. The reluctance to challenge the Republican story of how the world works pervades Democratic elected officials at all levels. Shortly after last year's election, some Democratic politicians and liberal group lobbyists met to discuss a program for the coming congressional session. After an hour, only two priorities were clear: balancing the budget and cutting taxes. A frustrated voice asked if there was any chance to revive the issue of national health insurance, now that more than 40 million people are without health care coverage and complaints about the corporate takeovers of hospitals and health care are endemic. Eyes rolled. A congressman with an impeccable record for Democratic Action voting finally remarked: "As the President has said, the era of big government is over." End of conversation.

**D**emocrats can't become relevant again until they can muster the courage to push past the conventional wisdom that stops nearly every conversation among Democrats, traditional or new. The conversation stopper comes in three parts:

- The people don't want big government.
- Even if they wanted it, they can't afford it.
- Even if they could afford it, the global economy will not let them have it.

These propositions are not as self-evident as the conventional wisdom would have us believe.

**The voters don't want big government.** Polls consistently show that voters want almost all of the big things that big domestic government does, from Social Security and Medicare, to protecting the environment and the workplace, to building

schools and damming rivers and underwriting research. In 1996, American voters re-elected a President who had risen from the political grave by campaigning against Republican threats to cut Medicare, Medicaid, federal aid to education, and federal protection of the environment. He had vilified his opponents for forcing a shutdown of the supposedly despised federal government. To save themselves, vulnerable Republicans joined Clinton in passing an increase in the federal minimum wage—that is, big government ordering business to pay low-wage employees another 90 cents an hour.

Moreover, the President took credit for reducing crime by providing federal financing of 100,000 more cops on the street, forcing manufacturers to put V-chips in their televisions, and requiring insurance companies to maintain portability of health care coverage. Small impact perhaps, but big government nevertheless.

True, Democrats did not win back the House. But they were in the process of recapturing it a few weeks before the election when the scandals over foreign contributions to the Democratic Party broke, and the Democratic financiers diverted money from the congressional to the presidential campaign. Even so,

Democratic candidates for the House won about the same number of total votes as Republican candidates. The election could hardly be seen as a referendum against big government.

Even after having facilitated the Reaganite welfare reform scenario, which did involve a reduction in a big government program, the President finds himself caught in the contradiction that there are not nearly enough jobs to absorb the people being booted off of the welfare roles. His solution? In his own words: "We've got the deficit. We've got to balance the budget. We can't possibly meet the hiring targets of the welfare reform law unless we organize the private sector."

Organizing the private sector to hire people that it doesn't want may mean government that's cheaper, but hardly one that's smaller.

**But we have no money.** Nowhere is the power of Reagan's Magical Realism more revealing than in Democrats' obsession with the federal budget deficit. Murray Weidenbaum, the first chair of Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers, later recalled

A liberal  
story would  
raise citizens'  
expectations  
of politics.

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to journalist Sidney Blumenthal the evolution of Reagan's views of the possibility that his budget policies would create a string of deficits: "One, they won't occur; two, they'll be temporary; three, when they stick, they serve a good purpose—they keep the liberals from new spending programs."

The inherited structural deficit would have been a problem for any Democrat assuming the presidency in 1993. But it could have been used as an object lesson about the failure of the Reagan story. Instead, the Democrats accepted Reagan's narrative of the deficit as an emblem of incompetent and bloated domestic government.

As a symbol, the balanced budget has paralyzed Democrats beyond Reagan's wildest dreams. Its magic is so strong that it made Clinton's own real-world accomplishment in reducing the deficit programmatically irrelevant. The deficit is now a minuscule share of gross domestic product (GDP). But no matter; the majority of House Democrats—their leader Richard Gephardt is a notable exception—supported a budget deal that would further tighten the noose around the neck of progressive government.

To soothe their liberal consciences, Democrats beguiled themselves with the notion that once the budget is finally balanced, they will be free of Reagan's fiscal straitjacket. Right after the budget deal was signed, New Democrat Rob Shapiro wrote that "a balanced budget is conducive to activist government," citing as an example the new program to fund health insurance for poor children. But so long as the balanced budget is enshrined as the fiscal deity, there will never be any room for the domestic spending needed to stop, much less reverse, the steady impoverishment of the domestic public sector. The current deal is front-loaded with tax giveaways, and backloaded with a mortgage of unspecified cuts that will require further slashing of domestic expenditures to achieve balance. Moreover, the agreement does not address the fundamental long-term problem of rising health care costs. If the budget is truly balanced in the talismanic year 2002, the next year, 2003, will require still more cuts in domestic investment, as will the next and the next.

The promise of health care for poor kids was a sop to the liberals to get them to support the compromise. Winks from the White House hinted that this might be a "foot in the door" to national health insurance. But as a block grant to the states,

the program has no more security than the rest of the domestic discretionary budget, which as a whole must be further sacrificed if the 2002 goal is to be achieved. More thoughtful liberals might have pondered the example of HeadStart, the popular program of education for poor kids, which after more than 30 years still covers less than half the eligible children.

Democrats have become so mesmerized by the Republican story that they cannot recognize that the plot doesn't hang together. Witness, for example, the budget projections of the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), which are the primary source of the argument for fiscal austerity.

The CBO, under the control of the Republican majority, regularly makes three long-term economic forecasts to the year 2050, varying according to different assumptions about future budget policy. The economic model on which all the forecasts are based conservatively assumes that public investment in education and infrastructure makes no contribution to economic growth. Thus, literally, a dollar invested in a tavern is productive, a dollar invested in a school is not. The effect of this assumption is to make a balanced budget, which shifts investment from the public to the private sector, appear more effective in stimulating growth than it is. Even so, the CBO's scenarios dramatically undermine the conventional wisdom.

One scenario is the familiar disaster story: Current policies are frozen, the deficit rises exponentially after 2030, and the sky falls on the economy.

Under a second "sustainable" scenario, the budget is balanced by the year 2002 and each year thereafter. Per capita GDP rises to \$38,200 in 2030 and to \$50,400 in 2050. But a third scenario, also sustainable, which has received almost no attention, stabilizes the ratio of the deficit to GDP at 1.7 percent from now until 2050. Remarkably, the economic result is almost identical to the balanced budget forecast: a per capita GDP of \$37,500 in 2030, and \$49,200 by 2050. So even with an economic model that credits no benefits to public investment, the difference to the economy between a steady modest budget deficit and zero deficit is minuscule. On the other hand, the latter path of moderate deficits would free up a net (taking into account greater interest costs of maintaining a deficit) of \$600 billion over the next five years and more than a trillion dollars over the next ten for desperately needed public investments in human



and physical capital. In any realistic model of the economy, this investment would add enough to the long-term growth rate to surpass the per capita income performance of the balanced budget scenario. Yet Democratic politicians are so frightened of being labeled fiscally irresponsible that there is no effort to try to build on this opportunity to tell an economic story with an investment theme.

It gets worse. Consider how Democrats treat the ingredients of the deficit. The prime remaining source of the disaster budget scenario is the country's inefficient, chaotic, and expensive health care system. It combines the worst features of capitalism and socialism in which huge public subsidies enrich private insurers and providers. Bill Clinton had it right in 1993 when he told the country that the system had to be changed. But when his health care plan failed, instead of taking the issue to the country, he abandoned his story. This allowed the Republicans to redefine the villain from one of the health care system to one of Medicare and Medicaid costs, for which there is only one answer—spend less.

Within the context of the balanced budget, Democrats have also largely bought into Reagan's spending priorities. Eight years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, the United States is still spending more on defense in real terms than we were in the mid-1970s when the Soviet Union was armed to the teeth. Clinton's proposal to expand NATO will add an estimated \$40 billion in additional military spending to bring the new eastern European nations' military up to required NATO standards (the new countries don't have the money and our European allies have said they will not support the upgrading), and for more aid to Russia to overcome its anxieties. Slowly the Pentagon is regaining its old confidence; it has permitted the sale of F-16 fighters to Third World countries while telling Congress it needs money for more F-22s to counter the proliferation of F-16s.

**But the global economy will not permit us to have a big government.** Like the budget deficit, the global economy is both reality and myth. Over the last quarter century, the international sector of the U.S. economy has doubled and global international financial markets have indeed gained power over national economies. The United States, like other countries, does not control as much of its domestic destiny as it did 30 years ago. But we remain by far

the most important economy in the world, and we still make between 85 and 90 percent of what we buy. Selling to the U.S. market is a central economic goal of a large number of nations around the world.

So the United States retains enormous leverage. The American government has forced Third World countries to meet the demands of our multinationals to protect overseas investments and obey our patent and copyright laws. We have made the Russians accept a humiliating expansion of NATO. And alone against almost the entire world, the Clinton administration prevented the previous secretary-general of the United Nations from being reappointed—this, despite the fact that the United States is the United Nations' chief deadbeat, owing that world body more than a billion dollars in back dues.

Thus the United States could lead the world in creating the rules that would make a global marketplace work for everyone—not just those at the top of the wealth and power pyramid. The creation of international health, labor, and environmental standards, the regulation of dangerously volatile international financial markets, and the lifting of the debt burden to the weakest Third World nations is a task fit for the world's remaining superpower—and an inspiring theme for a twenty-first-century Democratic Party. But Democrats who have attempted to make this an issue are denounced by a Democratic White House that prefers to spend its international political capital forcing the rest of the world to swallow Reagan-Thatcher economic dogma.

**A** five-year cyclical expansion has lowered the U.S. unemployment rate and sent the stock market soaring. But the real wage of the typical American is 10 percent below where it was at the previous peak of 1979. Despite deregulation, privatization, and a halving of the corporate tax rate, private investment in this expansion has been no greater than in previous ones. In the 1990s, productivity growth in the United States is slightly below its anemic performance in the 1970s and 1980s—and considerably below the rate of productivity growth in western Europe, which for a decade has been saddled with Maastricht-induced austerity. As for our well-hyped national concern for the next generation, try this: In France the poverty rate for children under six years old is 6 percent; in the United States it's 22 percent. Which economy is working better for kids?

The consequences of Democrats remaining as supporting players in the Reagan movie will be profound, both to the nation and to themselves. The absence of a progressive story about what is happening to America deprives the citizenry of the analysis it needs to consider an alternative path. When the next recession hits, we know what the Republican explanation will be: Taxes were too high, government was too big, business was over-regulated. What will the Democrats say?

## A NEW STORY LINE: YOU ARE NOT ALONE

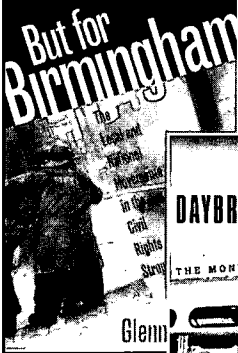
Reviving a liberal story in the late 1990s does not mean going back to the characters and images of the 1930s or the 1960s. But the basic theme of politics—who gets what—has not changed. It is no surprise that as the conservative story has come to dominate our political culture, the distribution of wealth in America has become the most lopsided in modern times.

A liberal story worth telling would assert that the distribution of wealth is not the result of natural economic laws, but of the capture of government by those who now enjoy its favors. It would reverse the conservative tales, in which the striking worker who withdraws his or her labor is a villain, but the striking investor who withdraws his or her capital is a hero. Or in which the public school teachers, who are not given enough books and pencils to teach inner-city children, are treated with contempt, and urban real estate speculators, who are subsidized to destroy neighborhoods, are revered as creators of wealth.

A liberal story would raise citizens' expectations of politics, teaching that you are not alone in your struggle to survive in the new brutally competitive world. As an American, whatever your race, your gender, or the condition of your pocketbook, you are in fact "entitled" to certain opportunities—to work, to education, and to have your vote count for as much as anyone else's.

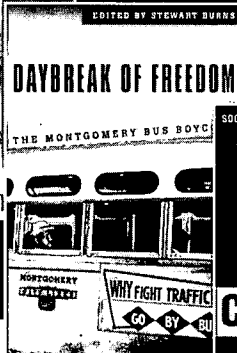
A strong story requires strong language. Once again, we might hear respectable politicians and journalists using bold terms—such as "full employment," "national health insurance," and perhaps even "working class." We need straight language not primarily as sound bites or bumper stickers, but rather as a means of making clear how we really think the world should work.

Get that story right, and the bumper stickers will follow.□




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# DEMOCRATIC POSSIBILITIES

## A FAMILY-CENTERED POLITICS

BY STANLEY B. GREENBERG AND THEDA SKOCPOL

**T**his political era, properly understood, offers great opportunity for progressive Democrats. The conservatives ascendant in both parties are more intent on budget cutting and attacking government than on addressing the real needs of families, who face extraordinary challenges in a new, unsettling time. A new, family-centered politics can define and revitalize the Democratic Party, just as earlier defining struggles associated the party with security for working people and the expansion of individual rights—but only if Democrats maximize the moment.

The 1996 election seemed to confirm the national frustration with politics. To be sure, Gingrich's conservative "revolution" met its Thermidor, as voters repudiated right-wing attacks on Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, federal education programs, and national environmental safeguards. But a lower fraction of citizens voted than in any election since 1924. Since 1996, neither the second Clinton administration nor the re-elected Republican Congress has offered any strong diagnosis of national problems or any bold prescriptions. An uneasy and evasive "bipartisanship" holds sway, with hard choices temporarily at bay in an expanding economy.

Meanwhile, Americans face extraordinary challenges at home and at work. Since 1973, each national economic expansion has increased inequality and insecurity for most working people. Although some Americans are flourishing, most working people—especially the three-quarters who lack four-year-college degrees—are working longer hours for sluggish incomes. People worry about their futures—when tuition bills loom, earners age, layoffs come, or sickness strikes. As fewer employers offer social benefits for employees, Americans also hear opinion leaders telling them that their hard-won, publicly funded social protections, Social Security and Medicare, may soon be dismantled, too.

Just when people are left more on their own and outside pressures are growing, two-parent families are more scarce and more fragile. The struggle to



bridge home and work is harder—and often lonelier. Single parents, mostly mothers, must care for kids without a daily partner while often holding down inadequately paid, unstable jobs.

Two-parent families usually do better economically, yet often juggle parenting against two or three jobs. Working parents feel pressed to find new reserves of time and energy to guide offspring through the shoals of a culture dominated by messages of libertine commercialism, often in inadequate schools and unsafe neighborhoods. Americans today, as James Garbarino has aptly put it, face the challenge of "raising children in a socially toxic environment."

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Americans would welcome a politics centered on security for families and opportunity and social responsibility for individuals. They resent politicians who cozy up to the glamorous and privileged, disregarding the uncertainties everyday families face. People would embrace political leaders offering substantial ways to improve life for ordinary Americans in the workplace, the home, and the community.

## "REAGAN DEMOCRATS" ARE LISTENING AGAIN

For Democrats, the political terrain has already shifted more than is generally perceived. Ronald Reagan attracted many working middle-class voters to the Republicans by promoting pro-growth, low-tax economics and proclaiming respect for religion and family values. Democrats, meanwhile, built support in minority and urban communities and among better-educated voters, but lost many working families whose parents had been mainstays of the New Deal coalition.

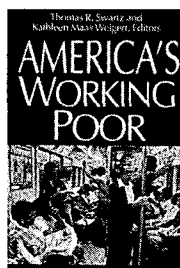
Central to the political equation in the 1980s was a new electoral phenomenon—working-class voters supporting the party of business. In 1980 and 1984, Reagan carried a majority of high school graduates as well as those with some post-high school education, and so did George Bush in 1988. Democratic presidential candidates got slaughtered among the post-high school graduates in every one of these elections, losing by 15 points in their best year (1988) and 23 in their worst (1984).

The Reagan era also created broader electoral legacies. Reagan, for example, reached into working-class communities by paying homage to family and religious values. Those gestures were rewarded with the votes of married people, who became very reliable Republican voters. In 1984, Reagan won married women's votes by 18 points (59 to 41 percent). In the 1980s, single women were voting increasingly Democratic, but the gender gap could never prove decisive for Democrats as long as married women—especially married mothers, non-college-educated wives, and southern white women—were so ensconced in the Reagan-Republican coalition. While college-educated women were voting for Carter in 1980, Dukakis in 1988, and Clinton in 1992, noncollege-educated women were an important mainstay in the national Republican coalition. They voted heavily for Reagan both times (by 10 points in 1980 and 17 points in 1984) and supported Bush in 1988 (by 5 points).

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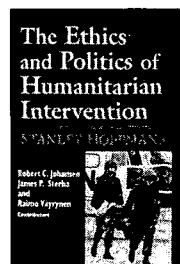
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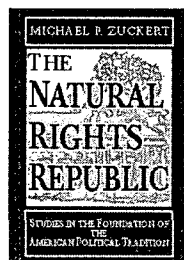
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But Bill Clinton's presidential campaigns of 1992 and 1996 won back working- and middle-class voters (those earning up to \$50,000 a year), confounding the Republicans' formula. The recent Republican nominees, George Bush and Bob Dole, averaged only 39 percent of the vote among middle-income voters—20 points below the level achieved by Ronald Reagan.

The Reagan hold on the American family ended in 1996, when many married women and women with children turned toward a more accessible Democratic Party. Bill Clinton has skillfully articulated popular themes: broad economic growth, more access to health care, and the transformation of welfare programs into work and responsible parenthood. He has championed crime prevention, reforming schools and expanding educational opportunity, trimming taxes on the working middle class, and strengthening parents and the civic capacities of communities.

The voters witnessed concrete change only in the general economic upturn and job growth, but they took note of the new Democratic priorities. Together, Clinton and other Democrats have at least provisionally laid to rest the specter of a party obsessed with elitist cultural liberalism or aid to the very poor alone. They have helped the Democratic Party speak for and to mainstream America.

In 1996, married women voted for Clinton by four points, while married mothers supported him by six points. Even among southern white women, Dole beat Clinton by only three points. The most dramatic change came among noncollege-educated women, once so critical to the Republican majorities; Clinton won by 18 points, a near landslide.

Among voters under 30, Clinton won by a quite astonishing 19 points, 53 to 34 percent, more than twice his margin for the electorate as a whole and comparable to the margin that Reagan achieved over Mondale a decade earlier.

In short, the politics of the 1990s signaled the closing of Reagan-era formulas for constructing the electorate and signaled new political formulas for Democrats to build support among working families, women, and young people—all of whom may be prepared to listen to a new kind of progressive narrative. Working Americans of all stripes are struggling to realize the promise of America: 60 percent of whites, 58 percent of blacks, and 55 percent of Latinos say that, compared to ten years ago, they are now farther away from attaining the American dream.

**W**ith formidable resources of moral certitude, big money, and grassroots organization among evangelical Christians, gun owners, and small-business people, conservative Republicans will remain a potent force. But the "conservative revolution" has been unable to deal with the real-world economic and family squeeze most Americans now face.

Newt Gingrich and his allies would dismantle much of the federal role and throw responsibility back to localities and the individual. For the right, aloneness is a kind of virtue, since it unfetters market forces and invites liberated individuals to sink or swim. But by late 1995, the conservative revolutionaries discovered that most Americans don't hate much of big government. Most people support broad public measures that enhance opportunity and security for ordinary working families.

### THE PARTY RIGHT GETS IT WRONG

When the New Democrat movement was launched in the 1980s, it argued, with considerable justification, that the party was ignoring the day-to-day lives of many working Americans—notably their worries about crime and deteriorating schools and neighborhoods and their commitment to values of work and parental responsibility. But virtually all Democrats now stress strong measures to contain crime (which, after all, hurts poor families more than any others). Most Democrats call for work rather than welfare, and most want to improve educational quality and opportunity.

Instead of declaring victory and pursuing new steps to carry out these themes, today's Democratic Leadership Council espouses a bipartisan centrism, much of which, ironically, contradicts popular values and fails to address broadly shared concerns. After the 1996 election, the DLC began to push "entitlement reforms" of Social Security and Medicare that resonate more with Wall Street values than with those of average Americans.

The DLC abandonment of a unified Social Security system with guaranteed benefits—one of the finest achievements of the modern Democratic Party—seems rooted in a larger ideological commitment to replace government programs with market incentives and individual choices. Social Security certainly needs demographic adjustment that maintains its universal and solidarity-building nature. But the DLC's marketizing course would exacerbate social divisions, make people less

secure, require more regulatory complexity, and grant a vast new tax-financed subsidy to private investment managers. A similarly rigid DLC pro-market formula permeates other policy proposals, from health care to education and training.

New Democrats highlight family integrity and parental responsibility—but tend to emphasize only the extreme circumstances of (for example) teenage mothers, or very poor families on welfare, or delinquent children. They have little to offer the vast majority of ordinary families. As close allies of an incumbent President, the DLC celebrates the upside of current trends, relevant mostly for those already inclined to vote Republican. The DLC lionizes entrepreneurs in “new knowledge industries,” ignoring the dislocations and anxieties facing a majority of late-twentieth-century Americans.

## HALF-RIGHT ON THE LEFT

The Democratic Party's left includes newly assertive economic populists: the AFL-CIO under John Sweeney, the Economic Policy Institute, and the Campaign for America's Future (CAF), a new advocacy group launched in 1996 as a counterweight to the DLC. Labor-oriented populists offer a biting analysis of the new economic conditions and uncertainties faced by most working people. “Inequality has risen to heights not seen since before the Great Depression. CEO salaries have soared, while wages have fallen. . . . America, which once grew together, is now growing apart,” according to the CAF. The rhetoric emphasizes the hardest-pressed workers, and the story line is mainly economic. Concretely, populists urge Democrats to promote unionization and workplace reforms, curb corporate power, and regulate international trade to protect wages and benefits for American workers.

Economic populists and the revitalized union movement have done much to push Democrats toward an encompassing analysis and message, and their analysis is a lot closer to the mark than the rosy picture of the U.S. economy painted by some on the party's center-right. But a one-sided economic approach risks focusing on only some segments of the workforce. Unionized workers account for just 11 percent of the private-sector workforce. More and more people are employed in small businesses or nonprofits, or as freelancers.

A labor-populist theme must be part of a renewed popular politics. But to make them the main story leaves out other important issues and

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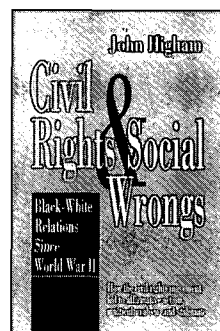
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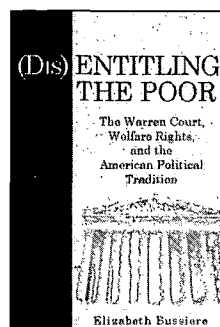
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constituencies. Working families care deeply about achieving a better quality of life—not just in their jobs; they define security more broadly than wages alone. An excessively workplace-centered populism risks discarding the considerable credibility that Democrats have won on such issues as fighting crime, supporting parental responsibility, promoting better schools and safer neighborhoods, and aiding working parents. A new popularized politics must incorporate all the values and concerns that matter to women and men in families seeking decent lives in a period of unnerving change.

**T**he shared problems and challenges facing working Americans and their families should be the heart and soul of the progressive story. The United States is at a crossroads: Along one way lies spreading insecurity, burgeoning inequality, broken families, and civic decline; along another way lies a renewed social contract, racial healing, and a revitalized democracy. As in past eras, this enterprise entails not just giving benefits to individuals. Equally at stake are social honor and our sense of mutual obligation between the community and the individuals who serve it, and the mutual contract between generations. The future growth of the economy, the vibrancy of our civic life and culture, and the well-being of tomorrow's retirees all depend on how well families can manage to do both economically and culturally as they raise the children who will become tomorrow's citizens and workers.

Ironically, a progressive vision of family support is "conservative" in the best sense. Whatever proponents of unfettered markets and unbridled individualism may claim, Americans throughout our national history have flourished with the aid of shared social supports, not in their absence. Those who want to dismantle existing family supports, such as Medicare and Social Security, and those who struggle to preclude new supports for working parents, such as "health care that is always there," are the true wild-eyed radicals of our time. In contrast, popular progressives who champion an inclusive vision of social supports for families are the ones reclaiming the best traditions of American democracy.

## THE NEW MAJORITY

The Great Society Democratic coalition was built from the top among the best educated and those most committed to expanding individual

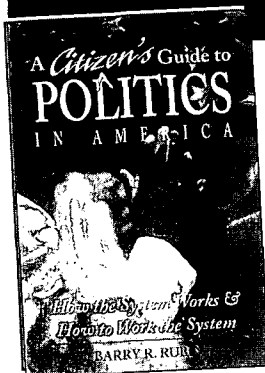
rights, and from the bottom among those with the lowest incomes and disadvantaged minority voters who faced widespread discrimination. The new popular progressive majority will be built broadly among working middle-class families, shaped by the new task of helping people of ordinary luck to achieve a better life in a world of unimagined changes and of growing economic and family pressures.

We envision an expanded version of the old coalition: Popular progressives can earn strong majorities among families earning under \$50,000 per year and with those struggling to succeed without benefit of a four-year-college degree—huge groups that together make up perhaps two-thirds of our voting population. African Americans continue to support a strong governmental role; yet moderate and conservative white Democrats—mostly the noncollege educated, the elderly, and women—are protective of government retirement and universal health programs. Blue-collar men resent corporations that compete globally at the expense of their own workers, yet these voters also strongly favor expanded support for the family, from education to retirement. With anti-immigrant sentiment rising, Latino voters are part of the coalition. Roman Catholics would rally to a Democratic Party respectful of family and committed to defending government's unique role in supporting it. And the young are both natural idealists and the beneficiaries of programs friendly to families.

**I**n the short term, we may witness none of this—unless progressives seize the moment. The Republicans can still exploit the perquisites of congressional incumbency and the vast financial resources of the business community. The diminished, bipartisan agenda of the White House and endless stories about scandal may leave the Democrats diminished as well. But recognition of the sheer scale of the changes in the economy and in the lives of families cannot long be suppressed, and it demands a matching politics.

People will respond to a revitalized Democratic Party that is both culturally sensible and politically bold—sensible enough to speak to the values and concerns of daily life, and bold enough to renew the powers of democratic government for common betterment. The new majority is ready not only to hear, but also to help tell, the popular progressive story. □

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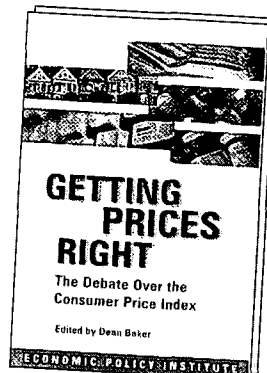
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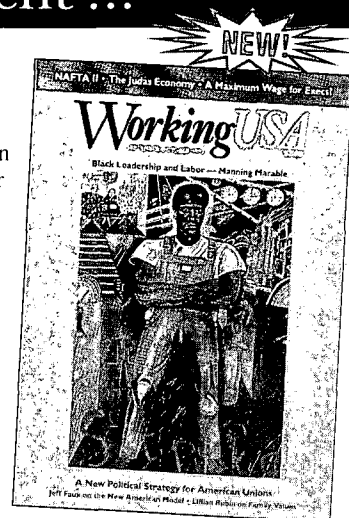
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# THE SPRAWLING AMERICAN CITY AND THE SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVES

# METROPOLIS UNBOUND

BY ROBERT GEDDES

A new form of human settlement has emerged in the twentieth century, radically different from the cities of the past. The city has become a city-region. American city-regions' population growth is now dramatically outpaced by their geographic growth. In the two decades from 1970 to 1990, the New York region had a modest population increase of 8 percent, but it had an explosive growth of 65 percent in its built-up urbanized land. While Chicago grew 4 percent in population, its urbanized land increased 46 percent. Even places that were declining in their population were simultaneously growing in their urban area; Cleveland, for example, had a population decline of 8 percent, while it expanded geographically by 33 percent. This urban growth cycle is similar across America. City-regions are exploding into their surrounding countryside at growth rates that are eight to ten times greater than their population increases.

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What is new is not the size of cities, but a change in their form. New York City, for example, used to have a concentric form surrounding Manhattan that resembled the growth rings of a tree. That was how it appeared when New York's Regional Plan Association, a civic organization, published its first plan 60 years ago. The Third Regional Plan published in 1996, however, describes a city-region with a population of 20 million people, extending 150 miles across and covering 13,000 square miles; its form now resembles a flower with petals radiating into five subregions in three states.

Ominously titled *A Region at Risk*, the regional plan warns of the dangers from the vast sprawl for New York's economy, environment, social fabric, and quality of everyday life. "Far more suddenly than people realize," write the authors, Robert Yaro and Tony Hiss, "super-sized metropolitan regions—areas hundreds of miles wide crowded with a dense mixture of aging cities, expanding suburbs, newer edge cities, and older farmlands and wildernesses—are emerging not just as a recognizable place but as humanity's new home base."

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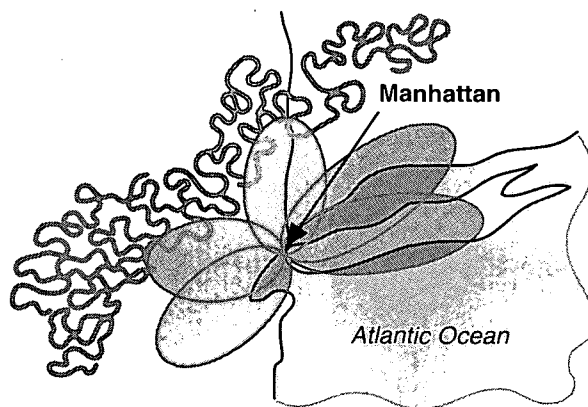
The everyday consequences for suburb and city alike are familiar enough: traffic congestion and inefficient transportation, unavailable and unaffordable housing, water and air pollution, social segregation and lack of community. In the decades after World War II, millions of Americans fled the cities to live in the suburbs, but in a sense the city has come after them. Nonetheless, the persistence of old political boundaries prevents the problems they face from being addressed together or even discussed coherently. The problems of transportation, housing, jobs, the environment, and social equity get scattered attention in public policy, but there is hardly any notice of the urban dynamic that lies behind them: the new form that American cities have taken. Nor is there much debate about the alternative paths of development that a few city-regions have taken in North America that could be the basis of a new paradigm for city-regions and neighborhoods in the next century.

### THE EVOLVING CITY

The emergence of a new form of human settlement is relatively rare in human history. For thousands of years, human settlements grew slowly and predictably. Generally, they grew outward in concentric rings, each expansion being larger but still recognizably the same as its earlier form. For example, while the European city of Bruges was growing over a period of 500 years, its boundary walls were periodically moved outward, but it kept the same kind of shape. As a pre-industrial city, Bruges faced economic and technological limits on its size, such as everyday walking distances.

The relationships between how things grow and the shapes they take fascinated the biologist D'Arcy Thompson. In his 1917 book, *On Growth and Form*, Thompson analyzed both natural and man-made objects, from marine shells, teeth, fleas, and dinosaurs to soap bubbles and bridges, observing how and when their form accommodated and changed during growth.

If this pattern, as Thompson argued, applies to mechanical constructions like boilers and biological constructions like the marine shell *Foraminifera*, it also applies to social constructions like cities. Before the industrial revolution, the size of towns and cities was constrained by natural



limits, such as the capacity of the surrounding countryside to supply foodstuffs and the ability of people to move about by foot or on animals without mechanized vehicles. Railroads changed city form in two ways. Long-distance rail lines connecting to other cities and distant agricultural areas meant that a city's population size was no longer constrained by the food from its sur-

rounding countryside. And short-distance rail lines extending into the country meant that the city's geographic size was no longer limited by walking distances. The city's form evolved into a star pattern, with new settlements—"railroad suburbs"—concentrated around rail stations, spaced a few miles apart. The legacy of America's dependence on rail lines and depots remains with us: The New York region, for example, has a rail network that is aging and somewhat disconnected but still includes 900 railroad stations.

The railroad suburb was a nineteenth-century invention, but it is also an alternative spatial model for the twenty-first century that retains some notable advantages compared to the sprawl of the more recent automobile suburb. The advantages of the star pattern come from its physical and social compactness, its preservation of the surrounding countryside, and its economy and efficiency of transport.

The automobile radically changed city form. The private car provided extraordinary flexibility, adaptability, and choice. Space and time were reconfigured. The city's edges—so clear in the old pre-industrial city and still evident along the finger-like corridors of the industrial city—melted away. Urban centers struggled to accommodate their new inhabitants—moving and parked

vehicles. Centers kept their appeal—shopping centers, research centers, sports centers, health centers, to name a few—but each became a separate center. The city became a city-region of disjointed centers. Today, at its best, it is a galaxy; at its worst, it is chaos.

## THE LOS ANGELES PARADIGM

Historically, two massive shifts of population have formed American city-regions. The farm-to-city shift after the Civil War is comparable to the massive city-to-suburb shift after World War II. Now more than half the nation's population lives in the suburbs. Although still separate legal jurisdictions, it no longer makes sense to talk of suburbs and cities as if they were separate; they are economically and ecologically joined in a new kind of human settlement, the city-region.

Periodically, a city seems to be the embodiment and image of the new. Historians call it the "shock city" of its time. Los Angeles has been the "shock city" of our time, as Manchester, England, was in the nineteenth century and New York was in this century's first half. Los Angeles is now seen as the first American city to remove itself from the European models of growth and form. Architect and urbanist Richard Weinstein argues that "the structure of the built-environment as it exists in Los Angeles now represents a paradigm of growth that already houses more than half of the [United States] population and is, with variations, the pattern of growth for most new settlements in the developed world."

The Los Angeles paradigm is an extended, open, unbounded matrix laced with linear corridors, from boulevards to commercial strips, and overlaid by freeways. Its keywords are *fragmented*, *incomplete*, *ad hoc*, *uncentered*. Concerning the Los Angeles environment, Weinstein argues that the open extended matrix, with all its in-between spaces, is more supportive of environmental health

than denser, more continuous urban structures. There is more green, in-between.

But the Los Angeles urban form has had inequitable social consequences. Ethnic colonies have become isolated, the city fragmented. If the goal is to balance the economy, the environment, and social equity, is the open extended matrix of Los Angeles the inevitable model for American cities?

## NORTHERN LIGHTS

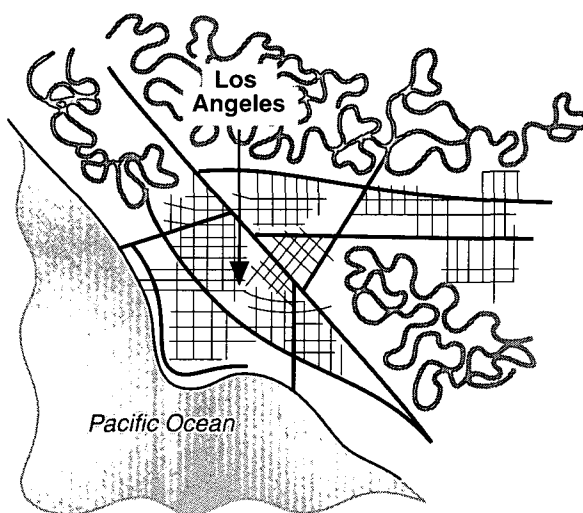
On the North American continent, Toronto represents an alternative model of urban growth and form. In contrast to Los Angeles, Toronto generates vitality in its centers. Toronto's downtown is vibrant and pedestrian-friendly, and its neighborhoods retain their strength as places of sociability.

By developing mass transit, Toronto succeeded, at least until the mid-1970s, in linking its centers and retarding the land-consuming and smog-producing dependence on the automobile. A key element in this achievement was that Toronto managed its postwar boom with a system of governance called Metro-Toronto that integrated urban and suburban decision-making. Metro-Toronto had jurisdiction over planning not only for

five municipalities in the core metropolitan area, but also for the surrounding communities. Among its achievements was a light-rail transportation network financed by the core city.

Toronto has thus become a more equitable city than Los Angeles not only because of Canada's generous social programs, but also because the city has not isolated its less affluent residents. Ethnic minorities, the poor, and the elderly—thanks to public policy—are less segregated in Toronto than in other North American city-regions. Not only did Toronto build the transportation connections; it has also created the continent's largest stock of dispersed mixed-income social housing.

In recent decades, however, the Toronto pattern



of development has drifted away from this tradition. In 1972, the Ontario provincial government combined the surrounding communities into four mini-metro governments (Halton, Peel, York, and Durham), each having strong powers over their own region. According to Gardner Church, a political scientist at York University, the province failed to create any comprehensive planning authority or to sustain the earlier commitments to contain growth and coordinate transportation. Sprawl set in and the region stood in danger of becoming, as observers put it at the time, "Vienna surrounded by Phoenix." But recently, in an effort to reverse this backsliding, the province has made Metro-Toronto the unified government of the core metropolitan area and created a new super-regional authority, called Greater-Toronto, for transportation, social services, and economic development. The surrounding areas will share the costs of social services with Toronto. Church believes this new system "offers the potential for a return to comprehensive, progressive planning."

**A**nother model for the future comes from the Pacific Northwest, where a chain of cities—including Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver—form a city-region now often called "Cascadia" (from the Cascade Mountains that parallel the Pacific coastline). Although this new city-region crosses state and international boundaries, the emerging idea of Cascadia provides an economically integrated vision of the settlements along a regional corridor, a "Main Street" called Interstate Highway 5. What is especially notable is that it also includes an ecologically integrated vision of the geology, vegetation, natural species, climate, and movement of water throughout the region.

Cascadia shows that an equilibrium of nature, society, and culture can still be the basis of city building. Think of Cascadia as a candidate for the historians' next "shock city." Its precedes-

sors, Manchester, New York, and Los Angeles, all drew their image from their built landscape. Cascadia draws its power as a new paradigm from its natural landscape.

Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver have each pioneered in planning for environmental protection and the provision of greenspace (parks, riparian corridors, natural habitats) as parts of the urban fabric. Today, however, greenspace is at risk. The greatest challenge comes from rapid population growth and a pattern of human settlement that, like other American city-regions, is consuming land at an even faster rate. Sprawl development has led to inefficient use of land, energy, and other resources and has had profound impacts on air quality, the hydrology of watersheds, and the environmental health of the inhabitants. The question

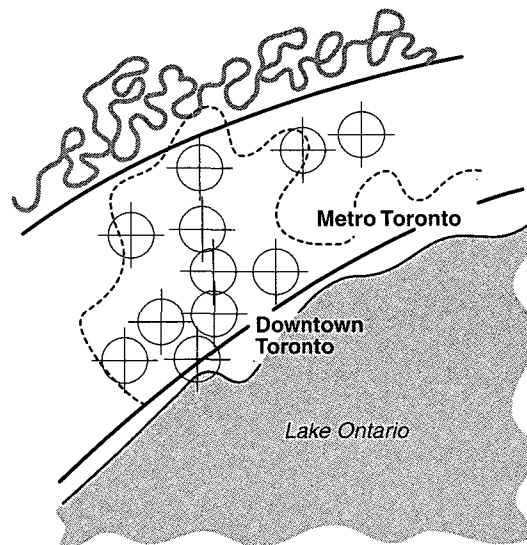
is whether Cascadia will go the way of Los Angeles. Or as Cascadian urbanists Ethan Seltzer, Ann Vernez Moudon, and Alan Artibise put it, "Will the legacy of our times result in the stewardship of the environment, or the destructive consumption of one of the most striking and abundant landscapes on the continent?"

Cascadia has also tried to meet the needs of socially diverse residents by regulating the form of urban develop-

ment. Unlike most other city-regions, it has tried to define "urban growth boundaries" to promote compact development and "urban villages" with a mix of living, working, and leisure activities. Portland, for example, has set a growth boundary that is the most concrete commitment in North America to reversing trends toward racial and class segregation and the flight from inner cities. But Portland would never have been able to undertake this process if it had not been for action by its state.

#### LEADERSHIP IN THE STATES

In the American political system, cities have little autonomy. The authority to enact policies and programs that might effectively shape the





development of cities lies with their state governments. Two states, Oregon and New Jersey, stand out as leaders.

Since 1973, Oregon has required each city to draw a growth boundary based on its assessment of economic development and community needs in the next 20 years. In turn, the city develops a comprehensive plan, including the steps it will take to create needed infrastructure for water and sewers, roads and transit, and other public facilities within the growth boundary. The growth boundary also influences state expenditures for highways and other roads. By 1986, to meet the state standards, all communities in Oregon had drawn up growth plans to limit their expansion.

Ethan Seltzer, who runs the Institute of Portland Metropolitan Studies at Portland State University, explains that the state expects land inside urban growth boundaries to be developed at urban densities and, in fact, allows developers to go to court for immediate approval if local jurisdictions fail to process permit applications for approved purposes within 120 days. "This means that multifamily development occurs by right and according to plan even in the suburbs!" Seltzer says. But outside the boundaries, he continues, "you cannot develop at urban densities, cannot get urban services, and face strict restrictions on what can be built in farm and forest zones. Even road widening for nonfarm uses is closely regulated outside of urban growth boundaries."

Seltzer notes,

Creativity comes into play because, especially in recent years, the state is committed to accommodating growth through infill and redevelopment, and not just on vacant land at the edge. Today, the market is responding. In the last six months, 30 percent of our residential growth has been infill

development in the region, 15 percent has been in attached housing/townhouses. . . . There is active development of housing in downtown Portland, and we will probably see a new public elementary school in downtown in the next few years.

The Oregon program directs cities and investors to steward land committed to urban use much the way a farmer stewards his or her fields. Rather than [allowing] disinvestment, we pursue reinvestment. It comes at a cost. Currently we are

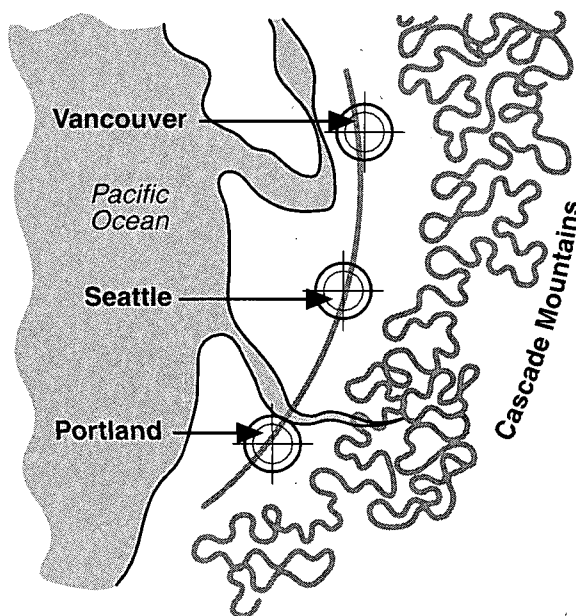
struggling with our popularity, and what it means to live not in a cheap region but a desirable, valuable one.

I guess what we've proven is that pursuing an end to sprawl is possible and desirable, but it won't by itself solve the problems of poverty or provide needed affordable housing.

He adds that while urban growth boundaries are not a "silver bullet," they "are great at what they do: stop-

ping sprawl on farmland, directing attention back onto lands already committed to urban use, and in the metropolitan region here, suggesting to local elected officials that their future is a shared one best approached through a partnership with their brother and sister jurisdictions living within the same economy."

**T**he growth and form of cities are critical issues for New Jersey, the only state to be entirely occupied by "metropolitan areas," according to the U.S. Census. In 1992, New Jersey produced its first state plan to "coordinate public and private actions to guide future growth into compact forms of development and redevelopment." Its policies are like Oregon's: "encourage development, redevelopment, and economic growth in locations that are well situated with respect to present or anticipated public ser-



vices and facilities, and to discourage development where it may impair or destroy natural resources or environmental qualities."

In New Jersey's search for a new model of urban growth and form, the keyword is *compact*. Comparing the traditional trends with the new policies proposed by the state plan, James Hughes and his colleagues at Rutgers University found that compact development would generate more jobs in accessible centers throughout the region, thereby reducing the jobless rates in inner cities. There would also be less destruction of the natural environment because forests, watersheds, and farmlands would be preserved. Local and state governments would save money because there would be less need for new infrastructure. For example, to accommodate growth until the year 2010, the traditional pattern would need 5,500 lane-miles of new local roads. For the same population and economy, the state plan would require only 1,600 new lane-miles. But the greatest benefit would be in the revitalization of neighborhoods.

## HERE COMES THE NEIGHBORHOOD

For revitalizing our cities, the "neighborhood" is almost always cited as the basic building block. Today in America there are two different concepts. The first is the idea of a "neighborhood" with a core and boundary. Spatially and socially, this "neighborhood" focuses on its core: local shops, a neighborhood school, perhaps a library and other community facilities for education, health care, and recreation. The neighborhood's population size and density, its network of roads and paths, even its image and character are linked to the neighborhood's core. At its boundary, the neighborhood's edges are marked by landscapes—generally, roads or parkways, or in cities, arterial streets. Neighborhoods, in this concept, are given names and generate loyalty; they are also inward-looking and intentionally static.

The city-building implications of this neighborhood concept are clear: Clusters of neighborhoods can create a district, and clusters of districts create the city. This "cluster" concept of the neighborhood, district, and city is the American vernacular. It is embodied in the postwar comprehensive plans for restructuring such old cities as Philadelphia and for the construction of such new cities as Columbia, Maryland. It is manifest in the power of "community boards" in large cities. And it is given

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The second concept, a "street-neighborhood," is radically different. It does not have the spatial and social clarity of the "core-and-boundary neighborhood." Instead, it idealizes the natural cohesion that comes from "neighboring" on the street and sidewalk. This sense of neighborhood is the consequence of face-to-face, casual, informal contacts in everyday city life. For the spatial setting of this concept of neighborhood, the gridiron street plan of such cities as Manhattan is especially useful. Paradoxically, the static, predictable, public structural form can support and stimulate the dynamic, small-scale, ad hoc, spontaneous life of everyone—residents and visitors, workers and walkers, insiders and outsiders.

The key to this concept of neighborhood is the street and sidewalk. The street is the armature, the skeleton, the structure of the street-neighborhood. To the streets are attached the social institutions that characterize a neighborhood: the schools, food stores, coffee shops, library and bookstores, movie theaters, local service stores, health clubs, parks and playgrounds, and of course, the workplaces and homes of the neighbors. The street-neighborhood is immensely popular. Throughout the United States, for example, old loft districts are being used for new living-working places; shopping malls are trying to simulate the life of a downtown street and sidewalk; and cities are recognizing that the key to the neighborhood is the street and its quality of life.

## CITY PROSPECTS

How can these concepts of neighborhoods serve an emerging new society profoundly affected by changes in communication and information technologies? They offer both positive and negative possibilities.

The core-and-boundary neighborhood can create a human-scale community and sense of place within a large city-region. Because it is a development unit that itself has edges, it can help establish an urban growth boundary. But the core-and-boundary neighborhood can turn pathological if the territorial boundary becomes hard-edged and gated, excluding outsiders from a segregated community.

The street-neighborhood has the advantage that it does not intentionally create physical boundaries that exclude people. At its best, it is open, wel-

coming, and place-making. Diverse street-sidewalk places would be welcome insertions into conventional core-and-boundary neighborhoods, or even more, into the fabric of suburban sprawl. But the street-neighborhood also has pathological possibilities: The streets can be the territorial setting for intimidation and crime and, at their worst, these threats can destroy our cities.

Increasingly, "Main Street" is once again valued as a lively center of a surrounding neighborhood. In Toronto, for example, the ethnic diversity of the city-region is expressed by its many neighborhoods—Greektown, Chinatown, Portuguese Village—each with its own "Main Street." What had been St. Claire Avenue is now Corso Italia. Similarly, in northern Manhattan, Harlem's neighborhoods are anchored by their crosstown streets. The most famous is 125th Street, but others such as 116th and 135th Streets are each a string of lively places, central arteries for economic and cultural activity.

If, as Peter Drucker predicts, our future organization of work will be more akin to that in pre-industrial cities, with an intimate mixture rather than separation of living and working places, then the neighborhood street will once again be the vibrant setting for everyday life. More than ever, we will value places to meet, to see and be seen, to drink coffee together, and maybe, to bowl together.

But this will not happen automatically; the form of a city is a consequence of public policies. Four kinds of policies are needed: regional compacts to build and maintain infrastructure for transportation, water, and waste systems; community growth boundaries to contain the urban built-up land uses; regional compacts to preserve greenspaces and natural ecological systems; and public initiatives to support the centers of cities and neighborhoods.

Streets and sidewalks, buildings and plazas, gardens and parks profoundly affect our everyday lives and ought to be the subject of public debate. "By its form, as by the manner of its birth," wrote the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, "the city has elements at once of biological procreation, organic evolution and aesthetic creation. It is both a natural object and a thing to be cultivated; something lived and something dreamed. It is the human invention par excellence." We need the courage to create our cities again.□



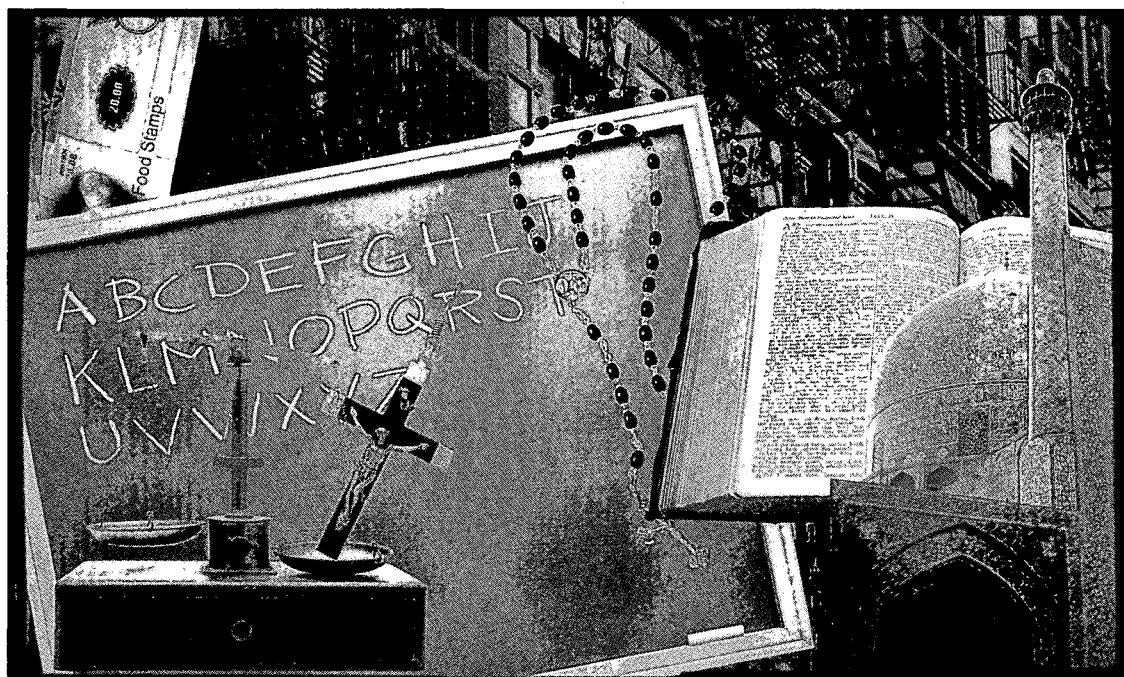
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# CAN THE CHURCHES SAVE THE CITIES?

## FAITH-BASED SERVICES AND THE CONSTITUTION

BY ISAAC KRAMNICK AND R. LAURENCE MOORE

A loud chorus now proclaims that America's social ills can be dealt with better by private religious organizations than by government. More than 400 ministries in America, up from 200 just two years ago, participate in the Christian Community Development Association's efforts to revive inner cities through Christian commitment and zeal. *Business Week*, the *New Yorker*, *Christianity Today*, *America*, and *City Limits* have devoted long articles to what is described as a veritable urban renaissance sweeping the country thanks to community improvement initiatives by churches, mosques, and synagogues. According to these stories, religious institutions lead effective programs providing social services and encouraging economic development in Chicago, Baltimore, Harlem, Brooklyn, Detroit, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Austin, and Atlanta.



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Many people would like such "faith-based" social activism to receive not only more private money, but also more government support. A Supreme Court decision earlier this year, approving the use of publicly financed teachers to provide mandated remedial education in church-run schools, opens the way to more extensive public financing of religiously affiliated educational and social services.

But public funds are where many liberals draw the line. Conservatives have a quick explanation for that reluctance: Liberals hate God. That is a popular litany among conservative and communitarian pundits these days, despite the overwhelming support of liberals for two Southern Baptist presidents, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, and their virtual deification of another famous Baptist, Martin Luther King, Jr.

Liberals have been lazy in responding to this charge. Most of their talk about religion has been in the nature of warnings about dangers posed to the separation of church and state by the activities of the Christian Coalition. It's all too negative; American religion is a crucial national resource for addressing social problems, and liberals need to say so in accents that don't sound partisan.

The problem liberals face is how to define what constitutes appropriate action by the government to promote church-based social services, beyond of course the significant benefit of tax exemption. Using the taxpayers' money to support religious institutions does raise constitutional questions. And by conservatives' own logic, there are legitimate fears that government can corrupt the very agencies and activities it is trying to assist.

Moreover, the role of the national government grew in the first place partly because private charities faced severe limits in dealing with social distress. Urban violence and crime became problems in the nineteenth century, when government was not, as conservatives say with misplaced nostalgia, "on everyone's back." States and localities had wildly different records in promoting social

justice, racism went without remedy, and private organizations, often churches, contributed to discrimination.

But many of the earlier conditions that prompted doubts about church-based services have no doubt changed. Faith-based activism could be an invaluable ally of public services, if only the two are able to work together within the framework of the Constitution. Fortunately, there is a reasonable middle ground in the current polarized debate.

## REFORM AND FAITH

Liberal reform and religion have had a long and close association in American life, with churches and other religious organizations providing important social services in American cities among recent immigrants and the poor. In the early nineteenth century, the American Sunday School Society taught poor children to read and write and provided immigrants with instruction in English. Unpaid Protestant women worked among prostitutes. The Young Men's

Christian Association movement made recreation accessible to the urban poor, while black churches and American Catholicism somehow found the means to spend more money on social services than any arm of government did.

Nearly all churches in the United States have contributed to America's Social Gospel tradition, arguably the most stunning achievement of

America's voluntary society. The notion that the ethics of Jesus could transform American society produced a broad consensus among many church and nonchurch organizations in the late nineteenth century and achieved lasting political influence during the Progressive Era with the formation of the Federal Council of Churches in 1908. Liberals used to boast that the Social Gospel was their creation, due in part to leftist progressives like the devout Walter Rauschenbusch, the Baptist theologian and social activist, who in the pre-World War I period demanded

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that God's "will be done in earth as it is in heaven." The liberal boast was overstated, but there is still a strong current of social activism in America that has liberal religious roots.

**D**espite conservative claims, the support for today's faith-based activism comes from diverse institutional and ideological sources. Michigan State has twice hosted conferences for faith-based community developers. Behind some of the efforts are corporate patrons like the Walt Disney Company and Atlantic Richfield, which recently gave \$800,000 and \$500,000 respectively to a project of the First African Episcopal Church of Los Angeles. Well-known foundations, liberal and conservative in orientation, are also involved. The Lilly Endowment of Indianapolis is one of the major players, with a program supporting "Religious Institutions as Partners in Community Based Development." The Ford Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trust are involved. The boosters also include the conservative Heritage Foundation, which loudly declares religious programs to be the best way to fight crime in the inner city.

One cheerleader for this urban faith-based activism is Joe Klein, now at the *New Yorker*, who earlier this year wrote glowingly of the impact that Reverend Eugene F. Rivers's Asuza Christian Community has had on Dorchester, Massachusetts. Among other achievements, according to a former Boston police chief, Reverend Rivers's efforts are partly responsible for the precipitous decline in gun-related homicides among teenagers since the summer of 1995. Klein follows the Christian-inspired urban activism of Tillie Burgin of Arlington, Texas, as well, and throws in Chuck Colson's Prison Fellowships ministries for good measure. His true hero is the political scientist John DiIulio, whose Catholic faith prompted him to leave the Brookings Institution and teach only half-time at Princeton University so he would have more time to help inner-city churches in Philadelphia.

Klein unfortunately perpetuates the popular view of liberals as enemies of religion. "The faith-based movement is politically inconvenient for liberals," he contends. "Traditionally liberals

tend to tap-dance when the faith-based issue is raised." But one liberal who is hardly tap-dancing is Henry Cisneros, the most visible political champion of faith-based liberal activism in urban America. In a 1996 essay, "Higher Ground: Faith Communities and Community Building," the former mayor of San Antonio and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development makes clear how important a priority his "religious organizations initiative" has been at HUD. In advocating a partnership between government and the churches in community building, he writes movingly of numerous religiously inspired inner-city successes, such as Chicago's Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, which has rehabilitated and developed 177 apartments and 120 townhouses with HUD assistance.

### ARE CHURCHES MORE EFFECTIVE?

In thinking about the prospects of faith-based services in inner cities, a useful beginning point is the debate about the role of parochial schools. Many people favor educational vouchers and other measures that might increase the number of stu-

dents attending church-run schools on the grounds that they do a better job than do public schools in educating socially disadvantaged children and rescuing them from a moral poverty that kills any desire to work.

Like other private schools, parochial schools can do something important that is forbidden to public schools. They can be selective about

whom they admit, and they are under no obligation to retain children who don't stick to the rules. Parochial school teachers have gained at least part of their reputation for being good disciplinarians because those children who can't be disciplined, or whose parents can't be counted on to encourage discipline, are not accepted in the first place or are soon expelled.

If public schools had even close to the same leverage in choosing their clientele, their record would look a lot better. Conversely, if parochial schools had to accept and keep everyone, at least everyone that the prison system didn't take off their hands, their accomplishments would be less impressive. Parochial schools were set up to "res-

The support for today's faith-based activism comes from diverse institutional and ideological sources.



cue" for the faith a limited number of students, not to train everyone. That fact does not make the work of parochial schools any less commendable or socially important or worthy of public support. It only reminds us that their success is not entirely due to the crosses or copies of the Ten Commandments displayed on their classroom walls.

One theory that is popularly advanced on behalf of parochial schools and faith-based community development holds that teachers and social workers who see their labors as part of a divine calling perform better than people who merely work for a salary, especially when that salary is paid by government. There is, however, no systematic evidence in support of this position, only anecdotes marshaled with partisan intent. It is patently untrue that only a sense of religious mission can provide the commitment necessary to improve schools and contribute something important to the problem of "moral poverty."

Jane Addams was not a religious person, but her justly famous Hull House, located among Chicago's immigrant population, was for many years one of the most effective community organizations in America. University teachers, such as ourselves, are constantly reminded as we write letters of recommendation to law schools of how poorly this country mobilizes the social idealism of its youth. There is plenty of evidence of what it can accomplish. The Teach for America Program, a privately funded effort to attract college graduates to teaching, has shown that ways exist to improve public schools without spending vast amounts of money or encouraging an exodus from public institutions. San Francisco's Partners in School Innovation, a nonprofit organization, has worked with the sadly underfunded AmeriCorps to produce marked improvements in reading skills, student responsibility, and parental involvement. Any conservative genuinely interested in the marriage of private initiative, government sponsorship, and corporate donations has many models in America to choose from that do not rely on faith-based activism.

One alternative to Joe Klein's Dorchester is a secular success story in nearby Roxbury, where the

Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative is rejuvenating a once moribund inner-city area through an alliance of a local Hispanic social service agency (La Alianza Hispana), a Boston-based trust (the Riley Foundation), and, at the project's inception, Boston's then mayor, Ray Flynn. The directors of the initiative are not otherworldly priests, but worldly liberals. The idealism that supports social commitment comes in many forms.

## THE CONSTITUTIONAL IMPEDIMENT

What irks conservatives is their belief that government stands ready to work with the secular Roxbury initiative but pleads the First Amendment in declining to assist religious initiatives like the one in Dorchester. That belief has some truth behind it, enough to ponder whether we have grown so constitutionally impaired as a nation that we cannot figure out better ways for government to promote contributions by religious groups to the general welfare, even ways that allow for substantial financial assistance.

The question of providing government aid to parochial schools is one of the oldest ongoing quarrels in American politics. The especially strict line between church and state fixed by this controversy was strongly influenced by the militant anti-Catholicism of many Protestant leaders from the beginning of the republic through the 1950s. Since liberals have long been telling conservatives that nineteenth-century fears of big government are outdated, it's only fair that liberals pursue the question of whether the principle of government neutrality toward religion requires revision in an age when government and churches provide many more services than they once did.

**T**he obvious difficulty limiting government assistance to religious social activism lies in the most important reason why church-based institutions achieve good results: They convert people. They can provide people with beliefs that don't solve their material problems but that give dignity and meaning to their

**G**overnment assistance to religious social activism is problematic—because church-based institutions achieve their results by converting people.

lives. If liberal scholars can write admiringly of the role of Christianity as an ethic of community self-help among slaves in the antebellum South, they can understand, without picking needless quarrels with conservatives, why religious practice might add something important to the life of a welfare mother in New York City. That does not require accepting the claim made to support a faith-guided community center in Washington that "only heartfelt religious faith can produce the moral transformation and racial healing needed to rescue families and communities from despair."

Charles Colson, who is not a trivial example of the changes that conversion can effect in someone's life, boasts that his Prison Fellowship "invaded" a Texas prison to offer two dozen inmates "round the clock Christian education and training." These inmates, Colson claims, are much more likely to stay out of trouble after their release than other prisoners are. The self-selection of inmates may preordain statistical results favorable to Colson and his supporters, but the program—the indoctrination, if you like—probably does some good for the selected inmates. But even in the face of conclusive positive results, government faces limits in opening its institutions, with implicit tax support, to aggressive religious sec-

tarian activity. Colson's group, in doing something more than providing counseling and services to prison inmates who are already religious, is on questionable constitutional ground.

We can understand the lament of many other religious leaders that they can't work effectively among the poor without "turning them to Christ." But if they do that, they are barred from all government support, direct or indirect.

Whatever the dilemma, that is the way it must be. In Detroit, the Joy for Jesus Church's job training program reported a falloff in the success of its placements when it dropped Bible instruction to get government money. But if the establishment clause of the First Amendment does anything, it bars government aid for religious proselytizing, no matter what general social benefits may be attributable to that proselytizing. That much about the minds of the Founders seems clear. They strongly believed in the social benefits of religion, insisting that a religious citizenry was essential to the success of the nation. Nonetheless, they left religious work to the churches and made a compelling argument that government involvement in sectarian affairs not only unwisely linked the fortunes of religion to the outcome of political squabbles but also neces-

# dissent

Fall 1997

HAROLD MEYERSON

## Can Liberalism Survive Clinton?

MICHAEL TOMASKY

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sarily resulted in religious favoritism that gave more religious legitimacy to some religious practices than to others. Free religious practice, American style, could not flourish in such an atmosphere.

## CONSTITUTIONAL POSSIBILITIES

Yet there are areas where government support of church-run services is generally acceptable and meets no constitutional barrier. Religious organizations do many things that are not, strictly speaking, sectarian. Catholic, Presbyterian, and Jewish hospitals heal people, and their medical services are underwritten by both private charity and public money. Religiously affiliated nursing homes, drug rehabilitation centers, and shelters for abused women can and should receive public assistance.

The Supreme Court in *Bowen v. Kendrick* (1988) decided by a bare majority led by Chief Justice William Rehnquist that federal grants to religious organizations for services related to pre-marital adolescent sexual activity did not violate the Constitution. One need not admire all the reasoning in the majority opinion, much less the Adolescent Family Life Act, to approve of the Court's effort to find a formula permitting Congress to pass legislation with a "valid secular purpose" that would not per se be unconstitutional because some of the funded private agencies had religious sponsors or stressed religious values. Upholding the stringent tests laid down in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971), the Court spelled out criteria based on those tests that adequately protect the establishment clause:

- Funded agencies cannot limit their services to people affiliated with any particular religious denomination.

- Services provided under an act cannot be religious in character.

- There can be no substantial risk that aid to a religious institution results in religious indoctrination.

- Religious institutions must not be the sole or primary beneficiaries of legislation.

- Any arguable effect of advancing religion must be "incidental and remote."

While holding that the Adolescent Family Life Act was not unconstitutional on its face, the Supreme Court remanded the case to the district court to determine whether the administrators of the act had erred in making specific grants to institutions that were "pervasively sectarian."

Curiously, the Court refused to bring parochial schools within the logic of its decision. It's difficult to see why. If a local school district wants to extend aid to private schools, including religious schools, to teach reading and math, then why cannot appropriate legislation be construed as having a valid secular purpose with only a remote and incidental effect of advancing religion? A teenager receiving pregnancy counseling in a church-run hospital or clinic vehemently opposed to abortion, however stripped the room might be of religious symbolism, is far more likely to be susceptible to covert religious "indoctrination" than a non-Catholic studying algebra in a parochial classroom.

Thus we do not disagree with the Court's recent decision in *Agostini v. Felton* (1997), approving a federal program that allows public school teachers into parochial schools to provide remedial education to disadvantaged children. In its decision, the Court modified its previous view that any public employee who entered the premises of a parochial school, with whatever secular purpose, ran a constitutionally unacceptable risk of becoming an agent of state-sponsored religious indoctrination. In place of this "contagion" theory, the Court seems to be moving toward a more sensible recognition that a secular purpose can survive in a religious setting. Americans have always recognized that fact; otherwise parochial schools would not be allowed at all. To be sure, a clear secular purpose is not by itself a sufficient constitutional test, especially if any program of assistance to parochial schools or church-affiliated social services suggests government endorsement of religious institutions over secular ones.

## DISCRIMINATION AGAINST FAITH?

What is troubling are not the Court's recent decisions, but the complaints of some religious leaders, abetted by politicians in both parties, that religious agencies working in inner cities continue to suffer from inappropriate government discrimination. In applying for government money, for example, they are required to shed the signs of "pervasive sectarianism." They must also meet state-mandated fair employment practices and a host of other regulations that some claim may "water down" their religious identity. Such requirements do not, in fact, constitute discrimination, and as Catholic colleges have demonstrated in this country along with religious agencies around the world, compliance with secular guidelines in seeking money to provide secular services



does not result in institutional self-destruction.

The complaint is related to the outcry of a broad coalition of church groups when the Court struck down the Religious Freedom Restoration Act in *City of Boerne v. Flores* (1997). The effect of this decision was to leave in place the ruling in *Employment Division v. Smith* (1990) that government need not prove a compelling state interest to enforce generally applicable laws that might create a burden, even a substantial one, on some religious practice. In our minds, *Employment Division v. Smith*—which denied a Native American church that used peyote in religious rituals exemption from Oregon's narcotic laws—is bad law in a number of ways, but not because it denies religious organizations or individuals presumptive exemption from legal obligations imposed on everyone else. A Christian opposed to homosexuality who chooses to become a landlord must be prepared to abide by laws barring discrimination on the basis of sexual preference. If a

religious group seeks government funding of its social services, it must obey regulations prohibiting religious indoctrination. In neither case is any individual or agency being coerced to violate conscience, since an easy option exists to avoid government regulation.

Regulation, of course, may be a good reason for churches to stay away from government. In any case, the proper effort by courts and legislative bodies to find formulas that allow religious organizations to provide social services does not imply that private educational and charitable institutions should ever become primarily dependent upon government for their funds. When voluntary organizations cease to be creatures of private contributions, a vital set of mediating institutions between the individual and government will be lost.

The odd thing is that many prominent conservatives who worry about this possibility and suggest that government ruins everything it touches are ardent advocates of a partnership between government and churches. They are prepared for government to turn over much of its welfare and educational responsibilities to church-related services.

There is, for example, the legislation offered by Senator Dan Coats that would allow citizens to “donate \$500 of their tax liability” to private, antipoverty organizations (which, according to Coats, “would take about 8 percent of federal welfare spending and provide it directly to institutions . . . armed with spiritual vitality, tough love, and true compassion”). A proposed Charitable Choice welfare bill would encourage states to involve churches as providers of welfare services “while protecting the religious character of participating faith-based programs.”

These measures are pushed with a partisan zeal that pits the wonder-working effects of faith-based

charities against the supposedly hopeless incompetence of all government programs. Religion is over-promoted as a way to argue for a return to state's rights, small government, and lower taxes, as if the churches could take on tasks, like saving the cities, which are not, after all, their primary mission. It does none of us good if reli-

gious leaders, and their supporters in Congress, seek to advertise the value of what they do by denigrating the work of government agencies that must operate under difficult rules of democratic inclusion. We should not forget that America is already, statistically speaking, one of the most religious nations in the world. If faith alone could solve our problems, cities in America ought to be in much better condition than in many European countries where most people never go to church. Unfortunately, faith has not kept our streets clean or safe, housed our homeless, or healed our sick.

Religion ought to play an important role in improving life in the inner cities, and it will. We need a truce in our God Wars. Liberals, many of them deeply religious, understand the potentially liberating message of a religious ethic of caring and sharing. Surely the activism of the Sojourners belies Mary Ann Glendon's recent suggestion in the *New York Times* that liberals share an “ill disguised hostility to religion.” What properly concerns us is respecting God and faith-based progressive reform while preserving the constitutional separation of church and state. We can do both a lot better than we have. □

**If a religious group seeks government funding of its social services, it must obey regulations prohibiting religious indoctrination.**

# Unholy Alliance

BY WENDY KAMINER

**I**t is easier to believe that God is in heaven and all's right with the world than it is to imagine an irreverent politician questioning whether there *is* a God in heaven or any benefit to prayer. Even political theorists and commentators, right and left, are apt to shrink from criticizing religious belief or religious communities. Etiquette demands respect for piety and the presumed virtues of faith, and most people believe in God anyway.

So it is hardly surprising that religion is being touted as the antidote to crime, drug use, and teenage pregnancy, although proof of religion's particular utility in treating or preventing social ills is quite equivocal. The religiously oriented Alcoholics Anonymous, generally considered the most successful treatment program for alcohol addiction, cannot count its failures. How do you track its anonymous and always changing membership? And religious leaders who run successful neighborhood programs, delivering faith-based services, cannot measure how much of their success depends upon religious proselytizing and how much it reflects their active and devoted membership in the communities they are trying to save. Belief in God is commonly presumed to inculcate virtue in us, although I don't think anyone has ever demonstrated that religious people commit fewer crimes—or sins—than atheists. And nothing—other than conventional wisdom—says you have to be religious to minister effectively to people's needs.

But if religious forays into social welfare don't necessarily "heal" us, conservatives may hope that they wean us from dependence on government programs. Faith-based social service programs, vouchers directing public funds to parochial schools, and legislation assigning public school teachers to parochial schools to conduct classes in basic sub-

jects like reading and math are giant steps toward privatization. ("Why not close down the public schools and leave schooling to as many qualified groups as wish to undertake the challenge and provide good quality education?" Bishop William F. Murphy asked not long ago in the *Boston Globe*.)

Religious institutions, after all, don't generally seek partnerships with the state, which would hold them accountable to bureaucrats; they seek access to state funds and control over policy. Their proposed takeover of welfare programs, drug treatment programs, and schools will lend justification to the government's abandonment of social services and redistribute public funds to private sectarian institutions. It's no coincidence that support for these programs has flourished at a time of widespread disdain for the federal government, a time when the President acts more like the Mayor of the United States—or the Preacher of it.

Still, it's unlikely that all religions will benefit equally from the disbursement of government funds. When *Wall Street Journal* editorial writers exalt faith-based social services, they're not suggesting that we teach troubled teenagers channeling or encourage them to don saffron robes and chant. They're advocating government support of only a few established religious institutions: churches, synagogues, and maybe mosques—or maybe not. Former Senator Bob Dole, for example, endorsed a welfare bill effectively requiring states to use churches as welfare providers, exempting the churches from federal employment discrimination laws and expressly allowing them to dispense federal aid in sectarian environments—but he also excoriated the Clinton administration for hiring the Nation of Islam to police public housing projects. As Jeffrey Rosen noted in the *New Republic*, Dole expressed concern about the Nation of Islam's discriminatory hiring practices and the likelihood of federal funds being used to support religious proselytizing.

Senator Dole's momentary conversion to separatism when confronted with federal support for a radical, minority religion he disdained revealed the majoritarian impulses behind campaigns for faith-based social services and other church-state alliances. Although right-wing Christians have begun presenting themselves as a beleaguered

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minority in competitions for government support, their demands for state-sanctioned religious practices are often demands for majority rule—reflected in familiar attacks on the Supreme Court's occasional defense of minority rights.

In the *Weekly Standard*, for example, Dennis Teti, the research director for the Tricentennial Foundation for America, argued that Congress should pass legislation allowing the states to post the Ten Commandments on government property, effectively overturning a 1980 Supreme Court decision keeping the Ten Commandments out of public schools. There is “a consensus across religious faiths that the Commandments should be publicly respected as the foundation for our constitutional principles,” Teti declared, overlooking the constitutional principles that shield individual religious preferences from popular “consensus.” And even beliefs that are shared “across religious faiths” may be anathema for nonbelievers. Religious freedom is not simply the freedom to worship as you choose; it includes as well the freedom not to worship—a freedom that should surely extend to welfare recipients and patients in federally funded drug treatment programs.

**T**he context for faith-based social services is a campaign to align public policies with majoritarian religious practices and ideals. Consider the outcry against *Romer v. Evans*, the 1996 Supreme Court decision that struck down Colorado's Amendment 2, which prohibited the state from protecting homosexuals from discrimination. Like the Court's school prayer decisions, *Romer* was condemned for overruling a majority vote denying equal rights to homosexuals, whose behavior many considered sinful. (It also fueled demands for a Christian revolt against our godless regime.) But what critics of the Supreme Court's “arrogance” in thwarting the majority fail to recognize is that the Bill of Rights is intended to protect minorities, even—or especially—when majority rule derives from religious belief. Thirty years ago, when the Civil Rights Act was passed prohibiting race discrimination in public accommodations, many people probably harbored religious beliefs about the sinfulness of integration. For some, white supremacy was divinely ordained. A hundred years ago, many believed that male supremacy was a divine right and obligation—a belief the Promise

Keepers organization is apparently fighting to revitalize today.

But current demands for religiosity in government cannot simply be attributed to the religious right. Left-of-center communitarians share much of the credit (or blame) for prevailing critiques of secularism and celebrations of majority rule. Communitarians have lauded religious institutions as paradigms of community and sources of civic virtue; they have associated assertions of individual rights with selfishness and anomie; they have given majoritarianism new respectability by calling it a renewal of community. Of course, liberalism has also long stood for restraining the market behavior of individuals to promote a greater social good, but it has fought government attempts to control private behavior. Communitarianism extended the liberal critique of individualism in the economic sphere to the sphere of personal relations and civil liberties. It romanticized religious belief and the spiritual power of communities, injecting the left with hostility to existential demands for individual autonomy.

In this climate, appeals to Jeffersonian ideals of separating church and state and reminders of the threat to minority rights posed by state-established religions will do little to counter anecdotes about recovering addicts who find God or born-again welfare recipients who find the will to work, as well as jobs. But if the principles restraining majoritarianism fail us, sectarian rivalries may restrain the formation of majorities, as the Founders anticipated. (“Security for religious rights,” Madison wrote in *Federalist* No. 52, depends on “the multiplicity of sects.”)

Will right-wing Christians fight to give Muslims the power to conduct prayers in public schools or administer government funds? Will Muslims and Orthodox Jews join Southern Baptists in a fight to post the Ten Commandments in the nation's courts? Historically, religious minorities in America have supported the separation of church and state, recognizing in it a grant of religious freedom. But if they begin to feel more threatened by secularism than by a theocracy in which a majority rules (with the promise of benevolence), then First Amendment strictures against establishing religion may fall. If sectarianism doesn't emerge early to prevent church-state alliances, it will emerge with a vengeance, too late. □



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# LONG LIVE COMMUNITY

## SOCIAL CAPITAL AS PUBLIC HEALTH

BY ICHIRO KAWACHI, BRUCE P. KENNEDY, AND KIMBERLY LOCHNER

Americans now understand that their health is at risk if they smoke, overeat, and fail to exercise. But a growing body of evidence suggests that public health also depends on a less widely understood influence—social cohesion. And while many Americans have stopped smoking, gone on diets, and put on jogging shoes, American society has become, if anything, less cohesive.

Consider what happened in Roseto, a small Italian-American community in eastern Pennsylvania. During the 1950s, when the town first caught the attention of medical researchers Stewart Wolf and J.G. Bruhn, Roseto posed something of a mystery. Death rates in the small town of about 1,600 people were substantially lower than in neighboring communities. In particular, the rate of heart attacks was about 40 percent lower than expected and could not be explained by the prevalence of factors known to increase the risk of the disease. Citizens of Roseto smoked at the same rate as neighboring towns, they were just as overweight and sedentary, and their diet consisted of about the same amount of animal fat. But the one feature that stood out was the close-knit relations among residents in the community. The town had been originally settled by immigrants during the 1880s, who all came from the same village in rural Italy. The researchers noticed the social cohesiveness and ethos of egalitarianism that characterized the community:



### THE TOCQUEVILLE FILES

Proper behavior by those Rosetans who have achieved material wealth or occupational prestige requires attention to the delicate balance between ostentation and reserve, ambition and restraint, modesty and dignity. . . . The local priest emphasized that when preoccupation with earning money exceeded the unmarked boundary it became a basis for social rejection. . . . Rosetan culture thus provided a set of checks and balances to ensure that neither success nor failure got out of hand. . . . During the first five years of our study it was difficult to distinguish, on the basis of dress or behavior, the wealthy from the impecunious in Roseto. . . . Despite the affluence of many, there was no atmosphere of “keeping up with the Joneses” in Roseto.

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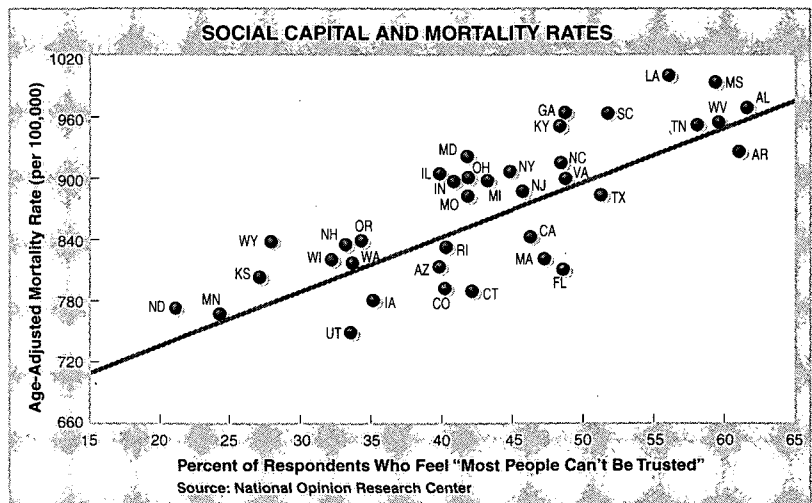
But as young people began to move away to seek jobs in neighboring towns and the community entered the mainstream of American life, the social taboos against conspicuous consumption began to weaken, as did the community bonds that once maintained the town's egalitarian values. About a decade into the study, the researchers noted:

For many years the more affluent Rosetans restrained their inclination toward material indulgence and maintained in their town the image of a relatively classless society. When a few began to display their wealth, however, many others followed. By 1965 families had begun to join country clubs, drive expensive automobiles, take luxury cruises, and make flights to Las Vegas.

The unforeseen consequence of improved material well-being and, probably more important, rising socioeconomic disparities was that the incidence of heart attack in Roseto caught up with neighboring towns within a span of a decade.

The notion that social cohesion is related to the health of a population is hardly new. One hundred years ago, Emile Durkheim demonstrated that suicide rates were higher among populations that were less cohesive. In 1979, after a nine-year study of 6,928 adults living in Alameda County, California, epidemiologists Lisa Berkman and S. Leonard Syme reported that people with few social ties were two to three times more likely to die of all causes than were those with more extensive contacts. This relationship persisted even after controlling for such characteristics as age and health practices, including cigarette smoking, drinking, exercise, and the use of medical services. The basic findings of the Alameda County Study have since been confirmed in more than a half dozen epidemiological studies in different communities.

These findings have ominous implications if the political scientist Robert Putnam is right that social capital is declining in America [see "The Strange Disappearance of Civic America," *TAP*, Winter 1996]. Putnam's memorable metaphor for this change is bowling league membership, which



has declined while bowling overall has increased. By social capital Putnam means the invisible glue that holds society together—the social networks, norms, and trust that enable groups of individuals to cooperate in pursuing shared objectives. On the basis of research in Italy and elsewhere, Putnam argues that social capital is a major contributing factor in economic growth [see "The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life," *TAP*, Spring 1993]. In fact, as the public health research shows, the harm from weakening social cohesion may not only be civic and economic—it may also be physical.

### IT DOES HURT TO BE ALONE

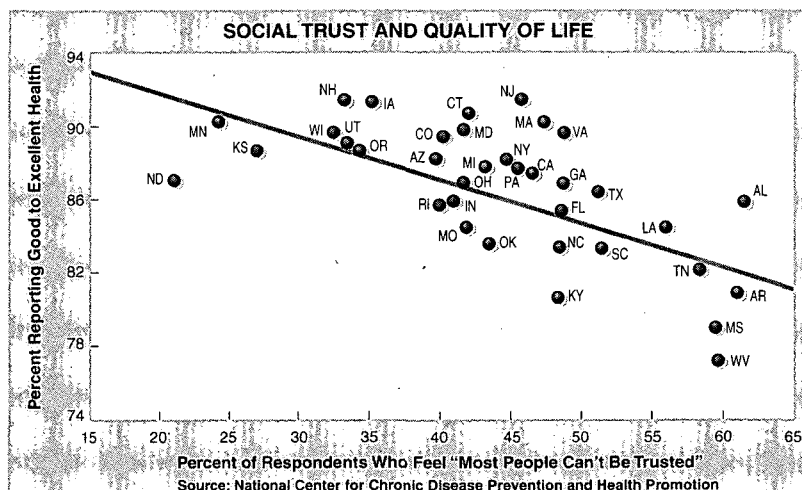
To explore this question, we set out to test the relationship between social capital and public health at the state level. In fact, there are quite marked geographical variations in civic trust and association membership across the United States, and when these indicators of social capital are arrayed against regional differences in mortality and morbidity, the resulting correlations are striking. The chart "Social Capital and Mortality Rates" (above) shows the relationship between the level of civic trust and the age-adjusted rate of death from all causes for the 39 states for which data were available in the National Opinion Research Center's General Social Surveys. The lower the trust between citizens—as indicated by the proportion of respondents in each state who believed that "most people cannot be trusted"—the higher is the average mortality rate.

A similar relationship with mortality prevails for the per capita membership of state residents in vol-

untary associations. These relationships between social cohesion and mortality hold among both whites and African Americans, as well as among men and women, and they persist after statistical adjustment for state variations in median household income and proportion of households living below the federal poverty threshold.

The figure at the right, "Social Trust and Quality of Life," displays the correlation between level of civic trust and a measure of self-reported well-being. The National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion employed the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) to ascertain the proportion of residents in each state reporting that their health was only fair or poor as opposed to good or excellent. (The BRFSS is a representative, random telephone survey that sampled more than 350,000 community-dwelling American adults between 1993 and 1996.) Again, there is a striking correlation between social capital and quality of life.

But does "bowling alone" really increase the likelihood that you'll get sick? Putnam's reference to the decline in bowling leagues evinced skepticism from some critics. Katha Pollitt, for example, pointed out that the popularity of bowling leagues emerged from a particular period in American blue-collar culture that permitted husbands plenty of boys' nights out (think of the memorable

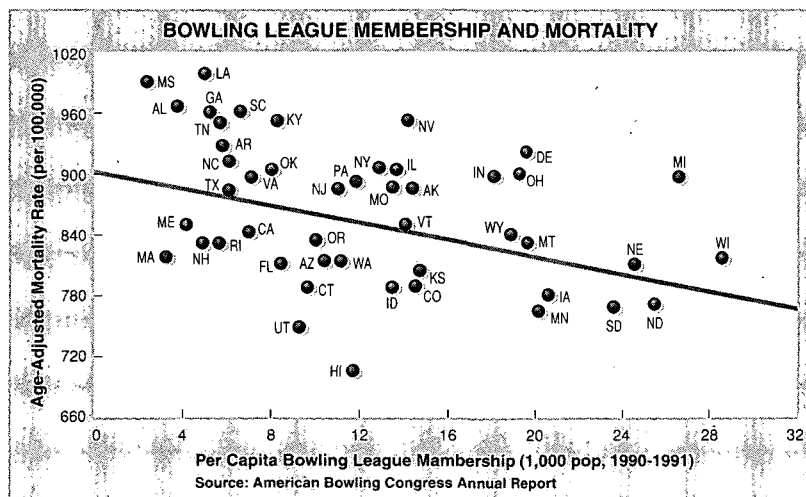


first glimpses of Marlon Brando in *A Streetcar Named Desire*). Other critics have pointed out that declining bowling league memberships may be offset by increased participation of other kinds, such as coaching and playing in youth soccer leagues.

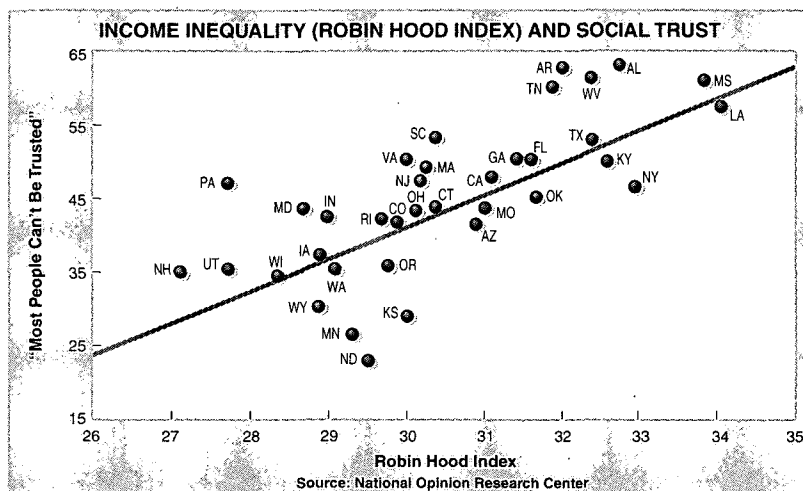
Nonetheless, bowling league membership turns out to correlate rather well with who lives or dies (see "Bowling League Membership and Mortality," below). To paraphrase John Donne, no man or woman is an island entire of itself—therefore we should never send to ask for whom the ball rolls.

## INEQUALITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Another feature of a society that may influence both its cohesiveness and its members' health is the level of economic inequality. In many countries, notably America, income and wealth are becoming more concentrated. According to a Census Bureau report released last year, the share of total income going to the top fifth of American households increased from 40.5 percent to 46.9 percent between 1968 and 1994. By contrast, the shares of the bottom 80 percent either declined or stagnated. The biggest income gains went to the top 5 percent of households, whose share of the economic pie increased from 16.6 percent to 21 percent. In 1994, the average income among the top 5 percent of households was more than 19 times that of the bottom 20 percent.







Might this polarization of incomes be loosening the social cement? In a forthcoming article in the *American Journal of Public Health*, we argue that this is the case. "Income Inequality (Robin Hood Index) and Social Trust" (above) shows the rising trend in income inequality plotted against the steady decline in civic trust, as tracked by the General Social Surveys. The measure of income inequality we used is the Robin Hood Index, which equals the proportion of aggregate income that would have to be redistributed from households with disproportionate earnings to those earning less, if incomes were to be level. The higher the Robin Hood Index, the bigger the income gap. As "Income Inequality and Social Trust" shows, the larger the income gap, the lower is citizens' trust in each other. Nearly identical results are obtained when we plot income disparity against per capita participation in voluntary associations.

Comparing public health and income distribution across countries lends further credence to the notion that income distribution plays a greater role in the quality of public health than more traditional indices do. In his recent book, *Unhealthy Societies: The Afflictions of Inequality*, economic historian Richard Wilkinson argues forcefully that the life expectancy in developed countries cannot be explained by differences in their absolute standard of living as measured, for example, by per capita income. Rather, a population's health depends more on the level of economic inequality.

The United States, despite having one of the highest living standards in the world (the real gross domestic product [GDP] per capita was \$24,680 in 1993), has a lower life expectancy (76.1 years in

1993) than less affluent but more egalitarian countries like the Netherlands (GDP, \$17,340; life expectancy, 77.5 years); Israel (GDP, \$15,130; life expectancy, 76.6 years); or Spain (GDP, \$13,660; life expectancy, 77.7 years). In fact, societies with the smallest income differences between rich and poor, such as Sweden and Japan, tend to enjoy the highest life expectancy (78.3 and 79.6 years, respectively). An egalitarian distribution of wealth and income seems to imply a more cohesive, harmonious society. The

quality of social relations, Wilkinson concludes, is the prime determinant of a country's human welfare and quality of life.

What does this imply for our future quality of life in this country? Is what has been happening to American society simply a case of Roseto writ large? Two studies published simultaneously in the April 20, 1996, issue of the *British Medical Journal*, including one we conducted, found that differences in income distribution across the 50 states were highly correlated with mortality rates, including deaths from heart disease, homicides, and infant mortality. To be sure, overall life expectancy in the United States has been steadily improving due to advances in medical treatment and the prevention of disease through lifestyle changes. But mortality might have declined more if income inequality had not risen. Our model suggests that for every percent increase in income inequality, the overall death rate is 2 to 3 percent higher than it needed to have been. By any definition, this is an important public health problem.

In recent years, unfortunately, government policy has tended to reinforce growing inequality, which is unsurprising in view of the disproportionate political weight that the well-off carry [see Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, "The Big Tilt: Participatory Inequality in America," *TAP*, May-June 1997]. The danger is a self-perpetuating cycle of growing income inequality, growing political inequality, and diminishing social capital. And because health too is at stake, it is no exaggeration to say that breaking that cycle will affect the body politic in every sense. □

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# THE DISENFRANCHISED

BY ANDREW L. SHAPIRO

**I**n recent years the idea of voting rights has become so tied to the question of racial districting—with its complex jargon, Rorschach-like maps, and inscrutable case law—that it's easy to forget how morally compelling the struggle for universal suffrage once was. Some might say this actually isn't such a bad development, to the degree that it reflects the absence of any remaining outright barriers to voting in the United States. This is the stuff of textbook pride: Constitutional amendments secured the right to vote for blacks, women, and 18-year-olds. Supreme Court rulings and the Voting Rights Act did away with other restrictive provisions such as literacy tests and property qualifications. We've even made registering and voting easier with the federal motor-voter law. So now everyone who wants to can vote.

Or can they? One group of adult citizens is still legally barred from participating in the electoral process: those four million or more people who have been convicted of a crime, usually a felony. All but four states—Maine, Massachusetts, Utah, and Vermont—disenfranchise incarcerated offenders. (It may soon be all but three states: In August, Massachusetts Acting Governor Paul Cellucci proposed a constitutional amendment banning prisoners in his state from voting.) Thirty-five states disqualify parolees and probationers. And, remarkably, 13 states deny felons the vote for life—even after they have been fully released from correctional supervision. Since voting qualifications are generally set by the states, these laws deprive felons of the right to participate in federal as well as state elections.

Not surprisingly, given their disproportionate representation in the criminal justice system, a disparate share of disenfranchised convicts are African-American and Latino. In fact a report released last January by the Sentencing Project noted the disturbing fact that one in seven black men in America cannot vote because of laws that disenfranchise convicts and ex-cons. Whether the impact of these statutes on minorities is accidental or partly deliberate, it is important to note that

there is a history in this country of intentional use of such laws to deprive blacks of the vote. Indeed, it's a history that should tell us something about the distinct injustice of permanently disenfranchising ex-felons, whatever their race.

## RACIAL EXCLUSION AND THE BALLOT

Laws denying criminals the vote have origins in Roman and English legal code, under which a felon literally could be banished from the body politic. But during the Reconstruction era in the South, disenfranchisement provisions were often tailored so that their effect would be to exclude mostly, or only, blacks. This selective exclusion was part of a larger assault on black suffrage that was codified by state legislators at constitutional conventions during the decades following the Civil War. Looking for ways to disqualify blacks without running afoul of the newly ratified Fifteenth Amendment, which prohibited blatant exclusion on racial grounds, these legislators adopted a host of ostensibly neutral voting barriers to achieve their desired end. In addition to adopting discriminatory literacy tests and poll taxes, they rewrote their felon disenfranchisement laws to subtly disqualify blacks.

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Mississippi led the way in 1890 by replacing a constitutional provision disenfranchising citizens convicted of "any crime" with a narrower section barring only those convicted of certain petty crimes that blacks were supposedly more likely than whites to commit. As the Mississippi Supreme Court explained it in 1896, blacks were more prone to "furtive offenses than to the robust crimes of the whites." Thus, "furtive offenses" such as bribery, perjury, and bigamy were disqualifying offenses, while "robust crimes" like rape and murder were not. Only in 1968 did the latter become disqualifying offenses.

Alabama, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Virginia also disenfranchised criminals selectively in order to keep the electorate white. One Alabama legislator claimed that excluding wife beaters alone would get rid of 60 percent of eligible blacks while removing few whites. The U.S. Supreme Court recognized this shameful history in 1985 when it unanimously struck down an Alabama constitutional provision—enacted in 1901 by lawmakers who openly stated that their goal was to "establish white supremacy"—that had permanently taken the vote from two men who had each written a bad check, a crime of "moral turpitude" according to the state's attorney general.

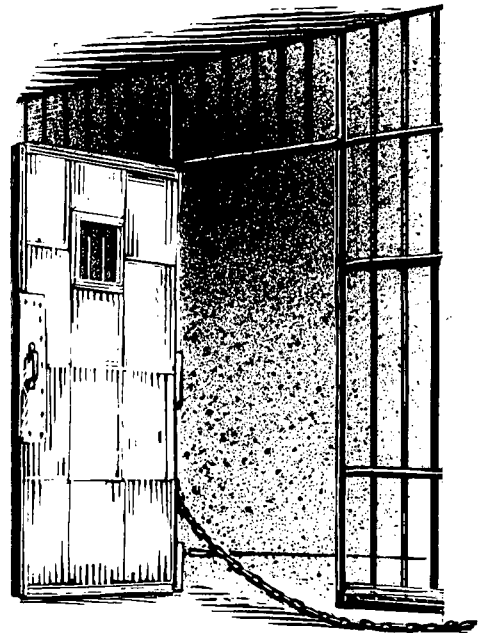
### THE VOTE AS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

While the felon disenfranchisement laws on the books today may not have been motivated by racial animus, their effect remains uncomfortably similar to that of the old southern provisions. As the Sentencing Project reported, a black American is almost eight times more likely than a white American to wind up behind bars—and without the vote. This is the result not only of different levels of crime, but of racial disparities in arrest, conviction, and sentencing rates. For example, a 1995 report by New York's Division of Criminal Justice Services conceded that black defendants were more likely to get prison sentences than white defendants convicted of similar crimes. Since felons in New York are knocked off the voting rolls only if they actually go to prison, at least some black inmates wind up losing the vote in part because of the color of their skin.

In fact, the disparate racial impact of felon disenfranchisement laws may make them susceptible to challenge under the federal Voting Rights Act. In 1994, Yale law professor Brett Dignam and I made this argument on behalf of a group of New York

State felons. Although we initially won the right to go forward with the case, a 5-5 federal appeals court split resulted in its being dismissed, though without precedential effect. A similar case is now being litigated in Washington State, which has lifetime disenfranchisement, and major civil rights organizations are considering challenges elsewhere.

But race need not be the only justification for striking down laws that take the vote away from non-incarcerated felons, especially in the states where these bans last a lifetime. Simply put, the



penalty is too severe. As Mississippi federal judge Henry Wingate reasoned in a ruling that reinstated the rights of a citizen who had been permanently barred from voting and running for office simply because he passed a bad check:

Disenfranchisement is the harshest civil sanction imposed by a democratic society. When brought beneath its axe, the disenfranchised is severed from the body politic and condemned to the lowest form of citizenship, where voiceless at the ballot box . . . the disinherited must sit idly by while others elect his civic leaders and while others choose the fiscal and governmental policies which will govern him and his family. Such a shadowy form of citizenship must not be imposed lightly.

Disenfranchising ex-felons who have served their time and paid their debt to society is inde-



fensible under even the most punitive theories of criminal justice. Though one may believe that an offender who has broken the social contract should be temporarily deprived of its benefits, *lifetime* disenfranchisement is inconsistent with that principle, not to mention the idea (strained as it may be) that errants can be rehabilitated and reintegrated into society. Moreover, it's not clear what purpose is served by depriving any felon, whether in prison or not, of a fundamental right. We don't deny prisoners freedom of speech or

cannot fence out a class of voters because of how they might vote. (One possible problem with having imprisoned felons vote arises in local elections, where prison inmates in some rural towns could overwhelm the electorate—but state provisions preventing prisoners from voting locally keep this from happening.)

Mainstream groups such as the American Bar Association and the American Law Institute came out against lifetime disenfranchisement decades ago, back when there were still criminologists who bothered to report that the stigma of exclusion might actually deter rehabilitation and increase the likelihood of recidivism. Today, because of the prevalence of juvenile crime and plea bargaining, waves of young people are losing their right to vote before ever getting a chance to exercise it. An 18-year-old first-time offender who trades a guilty plea for a lenient nonprison sentence (as almost all first-timers do, whether or not they are guilty) may unwittingly sacrifice forever his right to vote.

Now some will claim that it makes little difference whether ex-cons regain the vote because they are unlikely to use it. But whether or not citizens exercise their right to vote, they must retain that most fundamental political right in a society even nominally committed to democratic principles. The default should be inclusion in the electorate, not exclusion. Defenders of lifetime disenfranchisement note that ex-cons may be allowed to petition the governor or legislature for a special pardon to restore voting rights—but how many ex-offenders have the practical wherewithal to do that? Virginia, which has more than a hundred thousand disenfranchised ex-cons, restores rights to only about 75 a year.

In February, Representative John Conyers, the Michigan Democrat, introduced legislation that would restore voting rights in federal elections to non-incarcerated offenders. But this bill, which has little chance of passing anyway, would run into the logistical and legal problem of separating the right to vote in state and federal elections. Truly effective legislative reform must occur at the state level. In particular, the 13 states that continue to disenfranchise felons for life should abandon the practice. Once an offender has served his time, he deserves to have his basic rights automatically restored. Otherwise he is being penalized not for his crime, but for who he is—which is just the way the southern racists would have liked it. □



**D**isenfranchising  
ex-felons is indefensible under  
even the most punitive theories of  
criminal justice.

religion, due process, or the right to be free of cruel and unusual punishment. Rather, we narrow those rights only to the extent that they interfere with legitimate objectives of incarceration. It's not at all clear how allowing felons to vote disrupts imprisonment.

The old nonpunitive justification that disenfranchisement laws protect the "purity of the ballot box" is similarly warped (and has its own racial overtones). Electoral integrity is better protected by laws criminalizing voter fraud, and the Supreme Court has rightly ruled that legislatures

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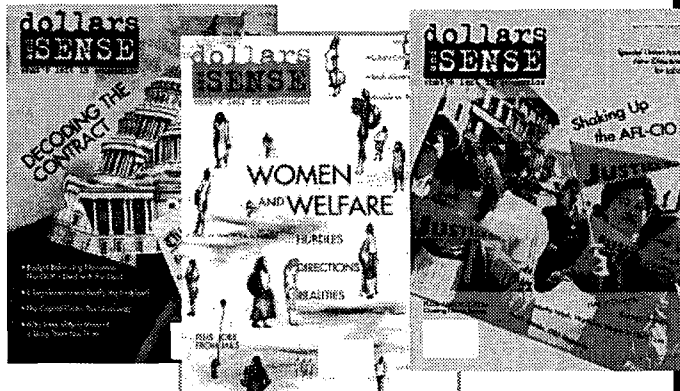
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# Polluted Data: Overestimating Environmental Costs

In July, Carol Browner, chief of the Environmental Protection Agency, issued new regulations reducing permissible levels of smog and particulate (fine soot) pollution. The political battle leading up to the decision was fierce, even within the administration. One staff member on the Council of Economic Advisers maintained that the regulations would cost a whopping \$60 billion—a figure quickly seized upon by industry opposition. The EPA's own cost estimate was much more modest, between \$6 billion and \$8 billion. In making her case for the new regulations, however, Browner publicly disavowed even her own agency's cost estimates. She argued that industry would find a way to do it cheaper.

Whom to believe? Confronted with conflicting estimates, most lay people either throw up their hands or choose sides ideologically. But history provides a basis for evaluating these estimates. Not only do industry lobbyists wildly overestimate the costs of proposed environmental regulations. More surprisingly, academic and government economists consistently do too—and for an equally surprising reason. When forecasting the costs of new environmental regulations, economic analysts routinely ignore a primary economic lesson: Markets cut

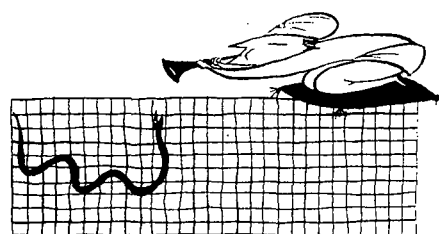
costs through innovation. And innovation can be promoted through regulation. This history is worth bearing in mind as we approach the most important environmental controversy to date—how to deal with the crisis of global warming.

## THE ABCS OF OVERESTIMATION

In every case we have found where researchers have calculated actual regulatory costs and then compared them to *ex ante* estimates, the estimate exceeded the actual cost. We have uncovered a dozen such efforts, ranging from A (asbestos) to V (vinyl chloride). In all cases but one, the initial estimates were at least double the actual costs.

**Asbestos.** When the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) instituted regulations covering exposure to asbestos in the early 1970s, they hired a consulting firm to estimate the cost of compliance. Two later studies found that the original prediction for the cost of compliance was more than double the actual cost, because of overly static assumptions.

**Benzene.** In the late 1970s, the chemical industry predicted that controlling benzene emissions would cost \$350,000 per plant. Shortly after these predic-



tions were made, however, the plants developed a process that substituted other chemicals for benzene and virtually eliminated control costs.

### Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs).

In 1988, reducing CFC production by 50 percent within 10 years was estimated by the EPA to cost \$3.55 per kilogram. By 1993, the goal had become much more ambitious: complete elimination of CFC production, with the deadline moved up two years, to 1996. Nevertheless, the estimated cost of compliance fell more than 30 percent, to \$2.45 per kilogram. And where substitutes for certain CFCs had not been expected to be available for eight or nine years, industry was able to identify and adopt substitutes in as little as two years.

**CFCs in automobile air conditioners.** In 1993 car manufacturers estimated that the price of a new car would increase by \$650 to \$1,200 due to new regulations limiting the use of CFCs. In 1997 the actual cost was estimated to be \$40 to \$400 per car.

**Coke ovens.** The original OSHA estimate for the cost of complying with the 1976 coke

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oven standard was more than five times higher than estimates of actual costs. OSHA's contractor suggested that complying with the standard would cost from \$200 million to more than \$1 billion. However, a Council on Wage-Price Stability study later estimated the actual cost of the standard to be \$160 million.

The OSHA consultant estimated that three steel firms in their sample would spend \$93 million on capital equipment and \$34 million in annual operating costs to comply with the regulations. A later study by Arthur Andersen determined that the three firms actually spent between \$5 million and \$7 million in 1977 to comply with the standard, and only \$1 million to \$2 million on capital expenditures. Ultimately, firms were able to meet the standard without incurring all of the capital costs in the first year, and actual compliance costs were dramatically lower than originally predicted.

In the late 1980s, coke production again came under regulatory scrutiny, this time by the EPA. In 1987, the agency estimated that the cost of controlling hazardous air pollution from coke ovens would be roughly \$4 billion. By 1991 that estimate fell to between \$250 million and \$400 million.

**Cotton dust.** In 1976, OSHA proposed a maximum permissible exposure limit of 0.2 milligrams per cubic meter for cotton dust, and its consultant estimated that compliance costs would be approximately \$700 million per year. The standard promulgated in 1978 actually allowed for higher exposure levels in some sectors of the textile industry, but the small changes in the standard do not fully explain

the decrease in estimated compliance costs; in 1978 the estimate fell to \$205 million per year. Moreover, a new study conducted in 1982, after the Reagan administration called for a review of the standard, concluded that compliance costs were \$83 million per year.

**Halons.** In 1989 members of the United Nations Environment Program's Halons Technical Options Committee disagreed on whether direct halon replacements could be found and whether a phase-out was possible. However, in 1993 the committee concluded that a phase-out of halons, a substance found in fire extinguishers that destroys the ozone layer faster than chlorofluorocarbons, would be both technologically and economically feasible by 1994.

**Strip mining.** Prior to the passage of the 1978 Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, estimates for compliance costs ranged from \$6 to \$12 per ton of coal. Actual costs for eastern coal operations have been in the range of 50 cents to \$1 per ton. After the regulations were adopted, the market switched away from coal deposits with high reclamation costs. Ready substitutes included surface-minable coal in flatter areas (with lower reclamation costs), and underground deposits.

**Vinyl chloride.** OSHA's vinyl chloride standard, set in 1974, provides a final example of wildly excessive cost projections. The agency's consultant estimated that it would cost \$22 million per year to meet the permissible exposure limit of 2 to 5 parts per million (ppm) in the vinyl chloride monomer sector, and \$87 million per year to meet the 10 to 15 ppm

exposure limit in the polyvinyl chloride sector. In addition, the consultant argued that the 1 ppm permissible exposure limit simply could not be attained. The president of Firestone's plastics division said that a standard of 1 ppm "puts the vinyl plastics industry on a collision course with economic disaster."

In spite of these protests, OSHA did adopt the strict permissible exposure limit of 1 ppm. A study conducted several years later by researchers from the Wharton School of Business estimated that the total cost of compliance for *both* sectors had been about \$20 million per year. A 1976 congressional research paper also indicated that the actual cost of compliance was dramatically less than the original prediction. The early claims that the 1 ppm standard could not be met evaporated; instead, the regulatory action led to about a 6 percent rise in polyvinyl chloride prices.

**W**hile costs have been consistently overestimated for emission reduction, they have been underestimated for environmental cleanup. For example, when the Clean Water Act was enacted in 1972, the EPA estimated that \$12.6 billion was needed to provide secondary sewage treatment systems. According to the American Enterprise Institute, actual spending for sewage treatment between 1972 and 1981 exceeded \$160 billion.

Costs for the Superfund program have also mushroomed. When first launched, people expected the mandated cleanups to apply to a small handful of Love Canals. However, the pro-

gram has expanded dramatically, now covering far more than a thousand sites. In addition, cleanup has proved far more costly than predicted: The average cost overrun on cleanup expenditures at Superfund sites has been 44 percent.

The message from these cases is clear. On the one hand, treating already polluted water, cleaning dirty soil, and scrubbing oily rocks costs a lot of money, (much) more than expected. On the other, when it comes to reducing pollution emissions at the source, it is almost certain to be (substantially) cheaper than we think it will be. Updating *Poor Richard's Almanack*, an ounce of prevention is clearly worth a pound of cleanup.

**W**hy were the estimated costs of reducing emissions at the source so inflated? The reason, of course, is "technology-forcing." When industry is required to lower pollution output, it usually doesn't just slap a new filter on an existing process; it often invents new technology. Frequently the new technology turns out to have higher productivity benefits, which help to offset the cost of the regulation. To see this, it is worth looking in detail at two high-profile cases where markets have responded to regulation by cutting costs.

### COKE BREAK

Robert Hahn, a well-known environmental economist, is currently a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and an adjunct research fellow at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and is a former

senior staff member of Bush's Council of Economic Advisers. In 1990 he and a co-author wrote a report for the U.S. Business Roundtable predicting the impact of the proposed Clean Air Act amendments on employment. These amendments had the dual purpose of cleaning up both acid rain and so-called "air toxics" from industrial plants.

The executive summary of Hahn's report leaves "no doubt that, across the Clean Air Act Amendments studied, there are a minimum of several hundred thousand jobs at various levels of severity of risk—even with the more moderate [Bush] Administration proposals." Hahn's absolute minimum prediction was 20,000 jobs directly lost, mostly from the closing of coke ovens in the steel industry. Hahn and his co-author viewed this as "truly a limiting, rock-bottom estimate" for several reasons. Important among them was that it considered only job losses arising from one portion of the bill—control of air toxics.

The amendments did pass later in 1990. The bill was in most respects more restrictive on air toxics than the one on which Hahn's study based its minimum job loss estimates. The legislation also authorized retraining funds of \$50 million per year for displaced workers, which gives a nice way to track job impacts.

In the almost seven years since passage of the legislation, fewer than 7,000 workers have received aid because their jobs were affected by the Clean Air Act amendments. And the vast majority of these have been eastern, high-sulfur-coal miners, who have been laid off due not to the air toxics

provision, but to the acid rain amendment. (The same legislation has in fact led to a boom in the western, low-sulfur-coal industry.) No workers from shutdown coke oven plants have received adjustment assistance. And between 1992 and 1995, production in the coke and (closely related) blast furnace industries actually increased, from \$1.74 billion to \$1.95 billion.

Hahn was consulting for industry here, so it is not surprising that his numbers were a bit on the high side. Corporate America, when faced with new regulations, has never been shy about claiming that the sky is falling. But Hahn is not a hired gun; he has very solid academic credentials. How could he have gotten it so wrong?

It turns out that Hahn's overestimation of regulatory impacts, while extreme, is not unusual. In fact, as we have seen in every case for which we have been able to track down data, academic and government economists have routinely overestimated the costs of reducing pollution emissions—by at least 30 percent, and generally by more than 100 percent.

### THE ACID TEST

The EPA's acid rain program is another dramatic case in point. Since 1995, electrical utilities have been required to hold permits for each ton of sulfur dioxide they emit. These permits, in limited supply, are distributed to firms each year by the government. The innovative feature of the program is that the permits can then be bought and sold. Given this, permit prices roughly reflect per ton pollution control costs. This is true because a firm generally wouldn't buy an extra



permit if the cost of doing so exceeded the cost of reducing sulfur emissions by a ton.

When the tradable permits market was being designed in the early 1990s, credible industry estimates of permit prices (and thus control costs) were \$1,500 per ton; the EPA was predicting \$750. In 1997, permits were in fact selling for around \$100 a piece.

Part of the current low permit price is due to a higher than expected initial supply of permits, but real compliance costs have in fact been two to four times lower than the EPA expected, and four to eight times below industry estimates.

### THE VIRTUE OF MARKETS

When environmental economists figure their cost estimates, one particular lapse is quite startling. Economists have tended to grossly underestimate a virtue of markets they readily preach elsewhere: flexibility. When pollution regulation makes a certain type of production more expensive, markets adjust—in fairly rapid order, uncovering substitute methods of production, and developing cheaper cleanup technologies. This fact, while not completely ignored by economists, is seldom factored into their cost estimates. Instead analysts tend to predict future costs statically, as if firms would continue to use existing practices and technologies.

So, for example, the much lower than expected costs for the acid rain program can be explained in retrospect by the increased flexibility that firms were given to achieve their mandated reductions in sulfur dioxide emissions. Rather than install

expensive scrubbers (or buy extra permits), many more firms than expected have met their sulfur dioxide targets by switching to low-sulfur coal, or developing new fuel-blending techniques. Railroad deregulation, along with economies of scale, led to an unexpected decline in low-sulfur-coal prices. And with the increased competition from coal, scrubber prices fell by half from 1990 to 1995.

All this is easy to see after the fact, but would have been very hard to predict. Hahn got his 20,000 lost jobs from air toxics regulation following this same practice—ignoring innovative market responses. While parenthetically noting that “technological improvements could reduce the direct economic impacts,” the study explicitly ignores the possibility “because of the difficulties in predicting how technology will evolve.” Because in the mid- to late 1980s, available control technologies for coke ovens seemed to be quite expensive, Hahn assumed that regulating air toxics would simply shut down much of the industry.

However, as we saw above, the EPA’s own estimates of control costs for coke ovens were plummeting even as Hahn was writing his report. By 1991, they were down by a factor of ten or more from the 1987 forecasts. Hahn may not have been aware of the EPA’s work; instead he cites an industry source to justify his claim that “there is widespread agreement that coke ovens will be required to close down, with an estimated loss of 15,000 jobs.”

A secondary reason for the overestimates is that in implemen-

tation, legislation is never as draconian as it appears on paper. In practice, timetables get stretched out, compliance dates get extended, and waivers are granted. Eventually the regulations begin to bite, but industry is usually given a fair amount of time to adjust. Most cost estimates assume high degrees of near-term compliance.

**P**eeering into the future is hard work. It is, in fact, close to impossible for economists to predict the specifics of how technology will evolve. This is especially true since much of the information about potential innovations consists of closely held trade secrets, which industry has little incentive to reveal. But basing cost predictions on scenarios that assume no technical evolution is guaranteed to produce gross overestimates. Innovation is indeed something at which markets are very good. When given a narrowly defined task—to produce commodity *x* emitting less of pollutant *y*—short-term substitutions and long-term shifts in technology guarantee large cost reductions over current practice.

### INFLATING COSTS, IGNORING BENEFITS

In the late 1980s, when the international phase-out of ozone-destroying CFCs got underway, a company called Nortel began looking for substitutes. The company, which had used the chemicals as a cleaning agent, invested \$1 million to purchase and employ new hardware. Once the redesigned system was in place, however, Nortel found that it actually saved \$4 million in chemical waste-disposal costs and CFC purchases.

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The CFC regulatory compliance costs for Nortel clearly were \$1 million. But how do we figure in the \$4 million savings? Economists have long recognized that a dollar spent on environmental pollution control is not the "true" cost to society. Some have argued that the cost is in fact much higher, because environmental spending "diverts" capital investment from more productive uses.

In recent years, by contrast, Michael Porter of the Harvard Business School has been pointing to examples like Nortel to argue that environmental regulations, by forcing firms to rethink their production processes, can often lead to lower production costs and lend a competitive advantage.

More generally, much of the reported costs of environmental regulation occurs when firms invest in new capital equipment, thoroughly redesigned to be both cleaner and more productive. Many of these investments would have happened sooner or later anyway. So a primary effect of regulation is to speed up the investment process. This is costly to firms, since they must scrap old machinery that is not necessarily worn out. When this happens, however, much of measured compliance cost is in fact just early capital investments. This in turn implies that the compliance figures are much higher than the real costs.

Researchers at Resources for the Future recently conducted a study asking how much \$1 spent on environmental protection really costs an industry. For some industries, specifically steel, the answer was little more than \$1, due to the diversion effect. For others, notably plastics, the indus-

try actually saved money as productivity was boosted. On average, the study concluded, \$1 spent on environmental pollution control reflected a real expense of 13 cents. In general then, even when cost estimates are "correct," this new research suggests that the reported values often overstate the true costs to the firm, on average by a factor of seven.

### THE ROAD TO KYOTO

The debate over compliance costs is now heating up for the mother of all pollution issues—global warming. International negotiators are at work on what are supposed to be binding carbon emission reduction requirements, to be announced in Kyoto in December. The European Union is pushing for a 15 percent cut below 1990 levels to be achieved by 2010; the members of the Alliance of Small Island States—whose very existence is at stake due to anticipated flooding—want a 20 percent cutback by 2005.

The United States, by far the world's biggest greenhouse polluter, is dragging its heels. President Clinton, when pressed to commit the U.S. to specifics, has promised only to convene a conference in the fall to try to achieve a consensus among American industry, labor, and other groups on the need for action. And Clinton will clearly face a tough sales job for ratification in the Republican-controlled Senate.

Academic economists have lined up behind a strong U.S. leadership role in Kyoto. Greenhouse "moderates" like Yale's William Nordhaus and Harvard's Dale Jorgenson headed up a list of more than 2,000 economists who

signed a letter arguing that a first round of carbon emission reductions could be achieved at relatively low cost. And in late July, to the dismay of U.S. industry, the Clinton economic team published its official cost estimates, confirming this general view.

There is a minority opinion among economists that reducing greenhouse gas emissions will be very, very cheap, and in the long run, even profitable. The reasons? Already existing energy efficiency technologies can help the United States break its addiction to cheap oil without too much pain. And within a decade or two, renewable fuel sources—coupled with efficiently redesigned technologies—will be cheaper than oil or coal are today. In this view, the sooner we redirect the market into a serious search for alternatives to fossil fuels, the richer we will be in the future.

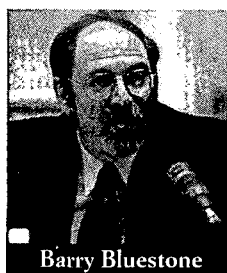
There are, however, likely to be transitional costs, both for workers, particularly in fossil fuel industries, and for Third World countries. In the past, government has not done a very good job in equitably sharing the burdens of such transitions. This is no reason to reject a global warming accord, but it is a strong reason to be alert to the allocation of costs and benefits.

In the global warming debate, as when past environmental regulations have been proposed, there are the three compliance cost scenarios: apocalyptic (industry), doable but costly (academic and government), and profitable (a few visionaries). Our guess, based on the record of previous academic and government cost forecasts, is somewhere between doable and profitable.□

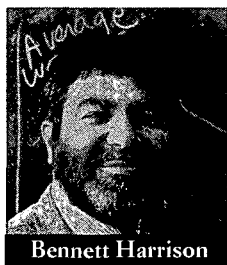
# Can't We Grow Faster?

Dear Alan:

In your recent article ["The Speed Limit: Fact and Fancy in the Growth Debate," *TAP*, September-October 1997], we very much appreciate your modest, wonderfully humorous, and clearly stated reasoning against betting too heavily on faster growth. We share



Barry Bluestone



Bennett Harrison

with you the view that the more capital-friendly tax and regulatory policies advocated by the right (and, increasingly, by the center as well) will not cause the economy to grow faster, in either the short or long run, and would only serve to make the distribution of income between labor

and capital even more unequal than it is already. As you will see in this letter, we also share other points of concurrence.

But we apparently have an honest disagreement on the central point. We see many signs of a higher potential growth rate; you see growth continuing at pretty much the same average rate as it has over the past five years or so. We, who wrote *The Deindustrialization of America* and *The Great U-Turn* about growing inequality, find it more

than a little amusing to be cast as optimists after being dubbed Dr. Doom and Dr. Gloom for so many years! We share your soft heart; we don't think we have gone soft in the head.

In the short run, it would seem that a lot of this debate about maximum feasible potential output growth turns on whether and to what extent the supply of labor will continue to increase. We think that labor force participation (and, more important, hours of desired work) are not fixed; in economists' parlance, they are "endogenous." The expectation of continued stagnant wages and anxiety about unexpected future loss of income are impelling more people to seek work for more hours than used to be the case. This is not a new idea; remember the "added worker effect" that we were all taught when we were graduate students of labor economics, in which we learned how spouses responded to the cyclically changing employment and earnings opportunities of "heads." Times have clearly changed; even the concept of a household "head" is rightfully disappearing from the economist's lexicon. But isn't the idea of endogenous supply response sound at the level of the individual, as well as at the level of the household? We freely admit that if and when there is a substantial increase in real wage rates and improvements in job security, labor supply growth could slow again. But this may be years away

and by then other factors, notably productivity improvements, can take up the slack.

You state that "the unemployment rate is about as good a measure of aggregate pressure on capacity as we have." It may indeed be the best we have, but that's not saying too much. It certainly does not make sense to use a misleading indicator as a basis

**Continuing the debate from "The Speed Limit," by Alan S. Blinder, and "Why We Can Grow Faster," by Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison (September-October 1997).**

for setting fiscal or monetary policy. Because of fundamental changes in the nature of working time, it is not too farfetched to say that the official unemployment rate is now obsolete and should be retired. Today, with "moonlighting" on the rise at one end of the spectrum and a rise in involuntary part-time employment at the other, the issue of working time is more important than ever. To continue to depend on the official unemployment rate—instead of on working time—as our measure of capacity constraint badly misconstrues reality by understating potential labor supply.

You seem to be farthest from



us, however, on the issue of productivity. After reviewing all of the failed attempts by economists to understand the sources of growth and particularly the "productivity paradox" of computers, we have turned like others to the work of economic historians who have shown that productivity gains from new technologies follow a nonlinear path. Initially, a new technological revolution reduces average productivity because it takes time to get the bugs out, because diffusion is often slow, and because all kinds of complementary changes are necessary in organizational structure to take advantage of the new techniques. In a sense, we have been wandering in the information technology desert for close to three decades. Our forebears trudged through similar deserts in the years following the introductions of agricultural innovations, the steam engine, and electricity. Now, with computers, we are at least in sight of the promised land. This allows for a much more sanguine view of growth potential than a linear extrapolation from recent past experience does.

A deeper understanding of the growth process can send a signal to business about expected future opportunities for profit, which in turn induce accelerated investments in innovative equipment and ideas, and encourage "tinkering" and external learning spillovers, all of which, in turn, raise the growth rate of potential output.

A little bit of doom and gloom can get governments and nations to change their behavior, and being hardheaded in the use of theory and statistics is generally a good thing. But in this case, a

slow-growth mentality on the part of government can become a self-fulfilling prophecy when it comes to business.

We're not looking for a miracle. We just believe there is enough uncounted labor capacity and enough improved productivity to give us at least another seven-tenths of a percentage point in annual growth into the foreseeable future.

Yours sincerely,

Barry Bluestone

Bennett Harrison

P.S. Just for the record: We, too, would love to see the Dodgers move back to Brooklyn. And while we're at it, how about getting the Giants back to Manhattan? At least that might stop George Steinbrenner from threatening to take the Yankees out of the South Bronx!

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Dear Barry and Bennett:

As a long-time resident of New Jersey, I cannot endorse your ridiculous idea to move the Giants to Manhattan—unless, of course, you mean the San Francisco Giants. Other than that, I think our disagreements make pretty thin gruel.

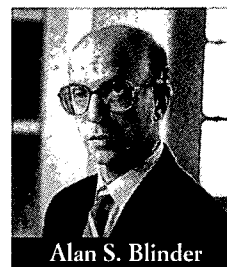
You claim that we might add at least 0.7 percent to the growth rate "into the foreseeable future." I wrote that intelligent policies might conceivably add as much as 0.5 percent "for a time." None of us is signing on to the Dole-Kemp, or even the *Business Week*, party line. Nonetheless, my best guess is notably less optimistic than yours. We appear to have two disagreements: over labor

supply and productivity.

Regarding the first, I of course agree that labor force participation is endogenous. But I always thought it responded more to employment prospects (measured, say, by the unemployment rate) than to real wages. Until very recently, one of the puzzling aspects of the current expansion was the failure of the labor force participation rate to exhibit its usual cyclical bounce. It was 66.7 percent in the first quarter of 1994 and it was still 66.7 percent in the second quarter of 1996. Since then, as you noted in your article ["Why We *Can* Grow Faster," *TAP*, September-October 1997], it has been creeping up. It's about time! But I would hesitate to extrapolate this behavior "into the foreseeable future."

You write about longer workweeks. Here again we must be careful to distinguish cycle from trend. Your article used a 1991 base year, which was a cyclical trough. The average workweek of private nonagricultural workers was 34.6 hours in 1989 (a cyclical peak year) and is again averaging 34.6 so far in 1997. History suggests that, in the long run, this series is pointing down, not up.

Regarding productivity, no one can confidently predict the future of what we used to call "the residual" because we couldn't explain its past. Who foresaw the dramatic post-1973 slowdown, for example, or can explain it even now? So no one can smugly rule out a sudden



Alan S. Blinder

acceleration. But to me, our ignorance argues for conservatism in forecasting—such as predicting a continuation of the trend for the last 24 years—not for assuming that we are “on the verge of a productivity renaissance.”

You seem to want to bet your pile of chips on the microchip, which has been around for 25 years without giving productivity a boost. Good luck. There are many reasons why the computer may have failed to deliver on its promises. Some of them apply to the future as well as the past. But hey, what do I know? As I admitted in my article, the big productivity gains from computers may be just around the corner. I’m just not willing to bet on it without seeing some evidence.

You say that history tells us that productivity lags behind major technological innovations by two or three decades. If so, the computer, like the proverbial slumping batter, is “due.” But these historical parallels strike me as less than compelling—for two reasons.

First, doesn’t the world move a lot faster now than it did in the nineteenth century? Doesn’t technology diffuse around the globe much faster? Look how quickly fax machines and cell phones proliferated, or how fast the Internet grew. In an economic sense, then, isn’t three decades a lot longer today than it was a century ago? And yet we are still waiting for businesses to learn how to squeeze productivity out of the computer.

Second, as Dan Sichel has suggested, the industrial transformation needed to replace typewriters and mainframes by PCs looks to be far less revolutionary and disruptive than that required to replace steam power by electricity.

Information highways are more easily built than railroads. If the transition costs that accompany the microprocessor are far smaller than those that accompanied the dynamo, then PC technology should have diffused much faster than electricity—as it probably did. So why are we still waiting?

One last point of contention: I do not see how you can accuse a Federal Reserve that has let the unemployment rate drift down to 4.8 percent (and is still, as of late August, not raising interest rates!) of having “a powerful monetary policy bias against faster growth.” In fact, Alan Greenspan has expressed views on the productivity impact of computers that are far closer to yours than to mine. I hope the three of you are right.

Yours sincerely,

Alan S. Blinder

---

Dear Alan:

Don’t worry so much about the *Jersey Giants*. Neither of us has any designs on them. It’s those guys in San Francisco we want back. We recognize that these days football is the high productivity sport, but we still like baseball.

That we are more optimistic about growth comes from our reading of recent data on both labor supply and productivity. On the labor supply issue, you point to little growth in the labor force participation rate as one reason for your greater pessimism. We agree that there has been little change over time in this source of labor supply, at least until very recently.

But the important development is in the growth in hours of work

among incumbent workers by week and by year. You invoke payroll data to show that there is no cyclically adjusted increase in hours of work. But that’s the wrong measure. Data from household surveys show a substantial increase since the last business peak in 1989. Between 1989 and 1995, the average workweek of individual prime-age workers has increased from 40.6 to 40.9 hours—an increase of 0.7 percent. Moreover, this increase in the workweek is faster than in either of the two previous economic recoveries. In addition, weeks worked per year for the same population have increased from 47.1 to 47.5 weeks. This means that the typical prime-age worker is putting in 30 more hours per year than at the previous peak. This increase in labor supply is not related to the unemployment rate; it is related to stagnating wage rates and anticipated job insecurity. As long as wages continue to stagnate, and job instability continues to grow, there will be some pressure on workers to offer more hours when the demand is there.

As for productivity, you reason that accelerating technology cycles should somehow reduce the lags in adoption and diffusion, so that we should have seen the payoff to the information technology revolution by now. But it’s just the opposite. Shorter shelf lives on new products and processes—including computer hardware and software—make premature adoption expensive and risky and encourage delays. Moving from one learning curve to the next before getting the full benefit of a new technology therefore adds to the lag in both adoption and diffusion. But, over time, people and

organizations do learn. Thus using straight-line projections to forecast productivity leads to a more pessimistic perspective than we think is warranted.

We applaud the fact that Alan Greenspan has prevailed over those within the Fed who would have raised interest rates by now. We hope that he will continue to restrain the natural tendency of central bankers to anticipate ruinous inflation around every corner. We're nervous about the possibility that the Fed will raise interest rates at the first sign that workers are becoming even a little less anxious about their own job security.

But our concern is not solely with monetary policy. The recent budget accord further compromises public investment in precisely those areas most crucial to stimulating long-term output—infrastructure, K-12 education, job training, and

civilian research and development. Unfortunately, the Fed is not the only body that can sabotage additional potential growth.

Yours sincerely,

Barry Bluestone

Bennett Harrison

Dear Barry and Bennett,

I think we can wrap this up quickly. The Bureau of Labor Statistics builds its productivity numbers, as you know, by dividing output by an estimate of hours based mainly on establishment data. Had they used, instead, the household data that you recommend, the official numbers would show hours growing faster, but productivity (output per hour) growing even more slowly! Hence the acceleration in productivity needed to make your

scenario come true would be even greater than we have spoken of in past letters.

Regarding that acceleration, I think we have agreed to disagree when it comes to the computer and productivity. You see the light; I still see the tunnel. The fundamental point, however, is that all of us are just guessing. No one can know what the future will bring.

Finally, I could not agree more with your sentiments on infrastructure, R&D, education, and training—and I have been saying so for years. Skimping on investment expenditures in order to reduce the budget deficit just doesn't make sense.

Yours,

Alan S. Blinder

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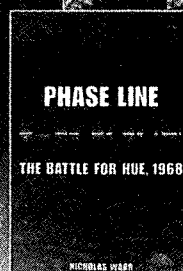
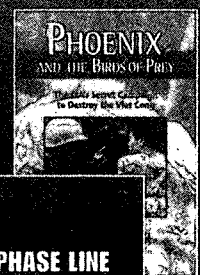
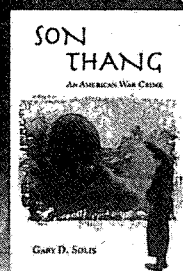
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# The Virtues of Humiliation

Dear Dr. Horowitz:

After reading your commentary on public shaming ["The Shaming Sham," *TAP*, March-April 1997], I realized that to engage in an intelligent debate on this topic, we first need to distinguish shaming from honorable forms of argumentation. I hope that you'd agree that it is shameful to point to one attribute shared by two parties, and then blame the second party for the various failings of the first. Thus, it is wrongheaded to accuse liberals of being commies just because both shared a concern for the



Amitai Etzioni

downtrodden. Likewise, it is quite unacceptable for Stephen Holmes to taint communitarians with the sins of authoritarians just because both groups are critical of liberals, as he does in his book *Anatomy of Antiliberalism*.

Of course, if you agree with me on the above two examples, then surely you will see the ironic flaw of your essay: You have written a tirade against shaming in which you avoid making an honorable argument by instead relying on shaming tactics of your own. Rather than treat shaming, which can be an educational and pro-social device, on its own terms, you repeatedly conflate it with: physical violence, including public hangings

and the beheading of convicted drug dealers; "godly fumigation" of the termites that Pat Robertson claims are running our institutions; blacklisting and boycotts; and—the least of the charges—turning "cultural enemies into feckless mush."

To separate fact from allegation, let's start at the beginning. Shaming entails symbolic acts that communicate disapproval, ranging from relatively gentle acts such as according a student a C+ or sending a disruptive kid to stand in the classroom's corner, to a more severe measure such as marking the cars of people convicted of repeat drunk driving with a glow-in-the-dark bumper sticker that reads, "Convicted DUI—Restricted License." Shaming thus differs sharply from many other modes of punishment—public spanking for instance—in that the latter inflict bodily harm, rather than being limited to psychic discomfort, which has untoward consequences of its own. True, violent punishments also inflict shame, but this is a side effect of the main abuse. To equate shaming with public hangings is like conflating the lowering of flags with funerals, and Radio Marti with the Bay of Pigs.

The first step in determining whether shaming is morally appropriate is to recognize that shaming is only justified when those being shamed are acting out of free will. When people act inappropriately but cannot help

themselves, such as when those with mental illnesses talk to themselves loudly, chiding them is highly inappropriate. Many progressives argue that it is wrongheaded to shame the poor, the disadvantaged, and the unemployed for antisocial behavior, because society is to blame for their condition. Social conservatives, by contrast, depict most everything from homosexuality to being on welfare as

**Continuing the debate from "The Shaming Sham," by Carl F. Horowitz (March-April 1997).**

reflecting one's free choices, and hence blameworthy if the choices made do not suit social conservative beliefs. In either case, when there is no free will, shaming is highly inappropriate.

But while you see any attempt to censure people as a form of intimidation used by political tyrants, the true test of the merit of shaming is faced when the people the community seeks to deal with are those who command a significant measure of free choice. Think about Michael Milken, who made \$550 million a year and then cheated and clawed his way to another \$100 million.

How are we to deal with those whose antisocial behavior cannot be ignored, and who can behave differently? The answer depends

greatly on your assumptions about human nature. The sanguine crowd tends to assume that people can be convinced to conduct themselves in a socially constructive manner solely by means of praise and other forms of encouragement, or by nondirective and nonjudgmental treatment, allowing the goodness of people to unfold. For those who share this view, shaming is indeed cruel and unusual and unnecessary punishment.

Once we realize, however, that a world of only positive reinforcements is wondrous but not within human reach, we must reluctantly turn to disincentives, sanctions, and other forms of punishment. True, we should first determine if the social demands are fair and reasonable, and to what extent we can rely on positive inducements. But, at

the end of the day, some form of disincentive—hopefully sparing and mostly of the gentle kind—cannot be avoided.

When it comes to punishment, the less you are inclined to shame, the more you end up relying on much harsher means of control, such as jailing and caning (two examples of punishment you mistakenly conflate with shaming). Many of my progressive friends are horrified at the hypothetical suggestion that a youngster convicted for the first time for dealing hard drugs on a playground should be sent home without his pants and with his head shaved clean. The widely used alternative is to send the same youngster to a place in which he will typically be subject to gang rape and deeply inducted into the culture of crime—a vastly inferior option.

Finally, shaming has one feature that even you cannot dispute: Shaming reflects the community's values, and hence cannot be imposed by the authorities *per se* against the people. Thus, if being sent to the principal's office is a badge of honor in a person's peer culture, then no shaming will occur. A yellow star, imposed to mark and shame Jews in Nazi Germany, is now worn as a matter of pride in Israel.

In short, unlike all other forms of punishment, shaming is deeply democratic. It can be said with only the slightest of exaggeration that if punish we must, shaming should be at the top of the list.

Sincerely,

Amitai Etzioni

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Dear Dr. Etzioni:

I must say that after reading your commentary, you have proved more insightful as a student of complex organizations than as an evangelist for community reinvigoration. Not only do you misrepresent any number of my points, but you also shoot yourself in the foot more than once.

From what I gather, the gravamen of your complaint is that I lump together disreputable proponents of shaming with reputable ones, thereby committing the cardinal sin of confusing the content of an idea

with its source.

My taking to task fevered extremists who call for, say, public floggings of adulterers, you argue, only will undermine efforts by won-

derfully civic-minded folks who deal with wrongdoing more humanely and effectively. I reiterate my position: Using shame as public policy attracts extremists, and the "good cops" of the shaming patrol differ from the "bad" ones far more in strategy than in substance. And the goal of both camps is stringent control over individual expression, lest the immoral among us lead us further down some cultural slippery slope. Inasmuch as it's necessary to distinguish between extremists and moderates, let us also remember "moderate" versions of bad ideas have a way of getting out of hand, and becoming witch-hunts. It is poetic justice that

those who start revolutions often get swallowed by them.

Extreme or not, supporters of shaming make two spurious claims: first, shaming precludes, rather than precedes, government censorship; and second, shaming is humane and benign in and of itself. Since you've chosen not to force my hand on the first point, I'll stick to the second.

Shaming, even to the supposedly prudent extent you favor, is not likely to be humane or effective. I chose *This Will Hurt* as the point of reference because it exemplifies the seductive power of a bad idea. It may not seem right to harp on Singapore's caning of an American vandal, but consider this: A prominent mainstream conservative, *National Review* senior editor Jeffrey Hart, in giving *This Will Hurt* advance publicity, not only praised Singapore's action, but called for similar measures here.

Let us hope that you are blessed with a milder disposition. Still, with few reservations, you think shaming a decent, stabilizing, and "deeply democratic" process. You delight in shocking your progressive friends in describing how you would humiliate a drug-dealing school kid. Leaving aside what type of drug was dealt, and in what quantity, I should like to know where such a strategy has worked.

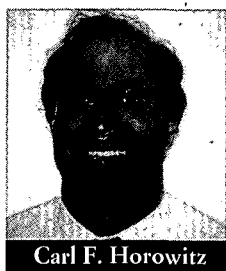
In your zeal to shame, you propose a dragnet that would not only snag drug-dealing school kids, but would also nail financier Michael Milken. That poor dead horse, Mr. Milken,

spearheaded the construction of the information superhighway, enabling companies such as Turner Broadcasting, McCaw Cellular, MCI, and TCI to bypass banks to acquire needed project capital. For his efforts, Milken did earn \$1.1 billion during 1984-87 (as opposed to the more virtuous Sam Walton, who earned \$4 billion in 1987 alone). But Milken during this period also paid an estimated \$500 million in federal and state taxes, and donated \$300 million to schools and charities. That's not including the \$600 million he paid the federal government years later to settle his case, or, of course, his stretch in federal prison.

Nowhere do I imply we should avoid speaking difficult truths to egregious wrongdoers, or to those accommodating them. Personally, I wouldn't want to belong to any country club that would have O.J. Simpson as a member. What I object to in today's manifold calls for moral censorship is the reflexively punitive tone, and the refusal to consider the consequences of institutionalizing fear. Individualism is not a four-letter word, and America is better off for that fact. In the long run, to challenge shaming as public policy, it is crucial to debunk the notion of America as in a state of cultural collapse, and thus in need of a "culture war" to restore it to good graces. But then again, without such a war most advocates of shaming would be out of a job.

Sincerely,

Carl F. Horowitz



Carl F. Horowitz



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DEBORAH STONE

# Work and the Moral Woman

A good woman is hard to find. Either she's threatening a lawsuit because she was denied a promotion. Or she's expecting the taxpayers to subsidize her illegitimate children. Or she's neglecting, even foregoing, children in favor of a career. Or perhaps she wants it all—work, children, love, leisure, and a flexible schedule—making her entirely unreliable.

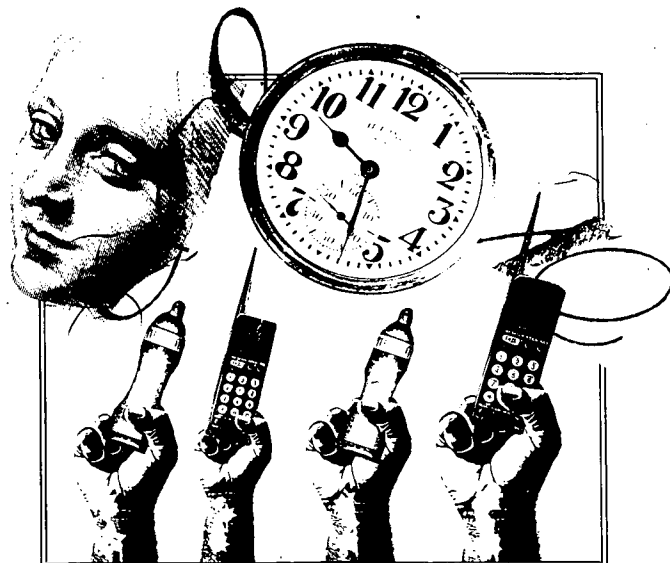
If women seem confused about what they want, society is even more confused about what it wants from women. Social philosophers have long pondered the meaning of work and its place in our moral lives: whether it is ennobling or degrading, whether virtue requires hard work or hard work inculcates virtue, or whether, in an ideal world, there should be more or less work. But when the worker is imagined as a woman, philosophy goes into a new key and both the questions and the answers are of a different tenor. About women, the questions concern whether they ought to work outside the home, whether they are capable of many kinds of work, and whether tending home, family, and community count as work at all.

Such philosophical questions have always been at the heart of

both labor politics and gender politics. Protective labor legislation in the U.S. finally got off the ground with assistance from women's reform groups and widely accepted ideas about women.

In 1908, after years of striking down protective labor laws, the Supreme Court finally upheld a state maximum-hours law because the law applied only to women; and women, everyone knew, needed special protections to fulfill the "benign and noble office" of motherhood to which history had "destined" them. Driven by passionate philosophical views, politics in turn piled shifting layers of contradictory norms and imperatives on women, and created a legacy of inconsistent cultural ideas, practices, and policies.

Let's start with an old chestnut: Is work stultifying, or is it fulfilling and uplifting? [See Alan Wolfe, "The Moral Meanings of Work," *TAP*, September-October 1997.] Ask that question assuming the worker is a man and the implied comparison is other kinds of jobs



or other ways of organizing work. When the worker is a woman, the implied comparison is with unpaid housework and child care, so the measure of work's effect on the female worker has a different yardstick: Compared to dusting and diapering? Compared to rearing the next generation of citizens, soldiers, leaders, parents? And the question has a different moral valence in a world where many people, both men and women, have thought that women should not do certain kinds of jobs or engage in paid work at all except in dire necessity.

Since marriage and motherhood have been treated as moral obligations of women, if not sacred callings, the question of whether virtue consists in performing disciplined, paid work is shaped by the alternative moral

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## WORKS DISCUSSED IN THIS ESSAY

Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein, *Making Ends Meet: How Single Mothers Survive Welfare and Low-Wage Work* (Russell Sage Foundation, 1997).

Diane E. Eyer, *Motherguilt: How Our Culture Blames Mothers for What's Wrong with Society* (Times Books, 1996).

Sharon Hays, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* (Yale University Press, 1996).

Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work* (Henry Holt and Company, 1997).

Tera W. Hunter, *To Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Harvard University Press, 1997).

Elizabeth Perle McKenna, *When Work Doesn't Work Anymore: Women, Work and Identity* (Dela-corte Press, 1997).

Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture* (Routledge, 1995).

vision of women as guardians of the family and hearth. Probe yet one level deeper and the debate for women is over something even more fundamental: How to reconcile work and womanhood?

**Y**ou might have thought that issue was settled by the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s, or by the sheer overwhelming scale of women's participation in the workforce. But Sharon Hays and Diane Eyer, authors of two recent books on motherhood and work, each make a chilling case that in the

dominant scientific culture, biology is still destiny. According to the three gurus of child rearing, Benjamin Spock, T. Berry Brazelton, and Penelope Leach, women are supposed to be selfless, nurturing, and caring, not selfish, competitive, and climbing. "In an ideal world," Leach wrote in 1989, "no woman would ever have a baby unless she really knew that she wanted to spend two or three years being somebody else's other half." Moreover, mothering is instinctive and what women really want to do, so all the social pressure on mothers to work is unfortunate. From Brazelton in 1983: "We may be ignoring . . . a deep-seated drive in women—a strong feeling that their primary responsibility is to nurture their children and their spouse. It may be unfair to expect a woman to be the fulcrum of her family; but it has always been so, and women feel it instinctively."

Spock, Brazelton, and Leach have not been oblivious to the revolution in women's roles, and they each make stabs at accommodating women who need to work, but less so women who just want to work. The latest edition of Dr. Spock's *Baby and Child Care* (now co-authored with Michael Rothenberg) uses the gender-neutral language of parents instead of mothers, but gives away the game in suggesting that a parent in the doldrums "buy a new dress" or "go to the beauty parlor" to get some relief. In the revised edition of *Infants and Mothers*, Brazelton acknowledges that he may have inadvertently "added to mothers' feelings of guilt when they were not able to stay at home throughout

the first year" (note that he doesn't say "unwilling to stay"), but then he whipsaws them back into guilt: "an understanding of the importance of their role as mothers . . . should help them see mothering as a goal that is as important as anything they can achieve in their professional lives." Leach, too, pronounces raising a child as "more worthwhile than any other job." It may seem like the child experts are asking very little of women, just a couple of years at home with each child. But the routine interruption of a woman's career required by the experts' advice is so taken for granted that it barely rates a mention. In their assertions of the priority of motherhood over job, they simply assign women different life possibilities than men. Moreover, though the advice may seem slightly archaic in 1997, the books by Spock, Brazelton, and Leach are the three top-selling child-rearing manuals, and they create a reservoir of guilt even among today's women. Just glance through *Parents*, *Working Mother*, or *Redbook* to see how much effort they devote to helping women cope with that guilt.

Sharon Hays calls these child-rearing manuals "hesitant moral treatises," though it's hard to see from either her or Eyer's reading of them what's so hesitant about them. They are, as Hays argues, moral prescriptions for appropriate child rearing and womanly behavior. They condemn impersonal, competitive market relations—paid child care, for example—and glorify women's unselfish love, relinquishment of personal goals, and, of course, financial sacrifice. The soul of a



woman is a giving soul. If she gives at the office, she'll have less to give at home. In the eyes of child-rearing experts, a woman who works while her children are young, who cannot turn off her career interests and aspirations, or presumably, her desire for the luxuries her earnings afford, is morally stunted.

### WOMAN'S PROPER WORK

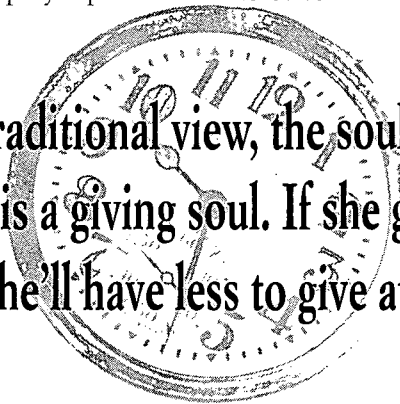
One of the ironies of women's history is that the leading white women social reformers of the Progressive Era sought to keep women in the home (despite their own enjoyment of careers as social workers, nurses, teachers, and political activists). They advocated higher wages for men so families could survive on one income, and they submitted every proposed social reform to the litmus test of whether it would encourage women to work or stay home. They opposed child nurseries and employer-provided

be full-time mothers. Black reformers, by contrast, understood the necessity for women to work, and focused their energies on creating the preconditions for women to be wage earners and community leaders.

Women's magazines and a new profession of home economists in the early twentieth century provided another source of cultural authority on the questions of women and work. *Ladies' Home Journal* and its advertisers promoted consumerism as an identity and way of life for women, but, as Jennifer Scanlon argues in *Inarticulate Longings*, the enterprise was full of contradictions. The editorial line had to be that women were better off—and better women—if they stayed home and consumed all the products that would improve their womanly skills. Yet much of the magazine was written by women, and the magazine frequently recruited female staff, so its editors made an exception for

younger, single, working women, fought a rearguard action to portray the nobility of the homemaker. Writing under the moniker of "A Plain Country Woman," between 1905 and 1918, Juliet Strauss steadily exhorted women to avoid paid employment. "God loves you if He lets you know that the plain is the great. The dish washed, the skillet or the dinner-pot scoured, the hearth swept, the bed made up, these are the great accomplishments." (No one is telling mothers on welfare anything of the sort today.) The magazine's editorial staff and many of its older readers castigated younger women for shunning the "humdrum." Indeed, the *Journal's* motivating story of societal decline (all social and political magazines have one) was a tale about younger women who hadn't the moral backbone to do society's vital drudge work.

The old-fashioned virtues of *Kinder, Küche, Kirche* might not have held much appeal for the *Journal's* more urban and educated readers. For them, the magazine offered the more modern challenge of household engineering: Apply the principles of industrial efficiency to housekeeping, turn it into a science, and thereby professionalize the job of the homemaker. Christine Frederick, a contributing editor much influenced by Frederick Winslow Taylor and his scientific management ideas, promoted a philosophy of housekeeping as both a science and "the greatest business in the world." She advised women to take up home canning "not because you love your family but because it's good business to do so." As a complex science, she believed housekeep-



In the traditional view, the soul of a woman is a giving soul. If she gives at the office, she'll have less to give at home.

maternity insurance for working women—policies dearly sought by current advocates of family-friendly employment—because they didn't want to encourage women to work. They established state Mothers' Pensions and later federal Aid to Dependent Children to allow widowed, abandoned, and divorced mothers to

the kind of clerical, sales, and office work it offered.

The larger contradiction, Scanlon notes, was that by promising women "better living through purchasing," the magazine made paid work more necessary and more desirable. Scanlon has unearthed how the magazine, against mounting pressures from

ing could give women new respect in the eyes of their husbands and a chance to use their brains and their college training. Housekeeping would no longer be drudgery. With just a mite of defensiveness, she vouched: "It is just as stimulating to bake a sponge cake on a six-minute schedule as it is to monotonously address envelopes for three hours in a downtown office."

### THE SACRED CHILD

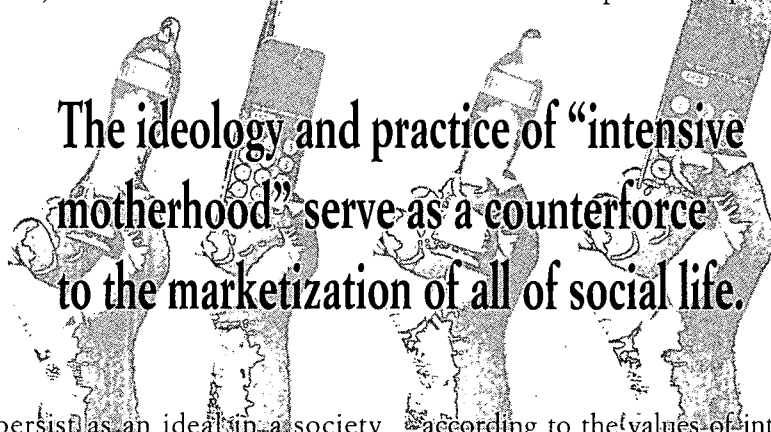
Consumerism and the home efficiency movement neatly incorporated middle- and upper-class women into the market world without letting them marketize their labor, without, in other words, granting them full economic citizenship. But alongside these movements, according to Sharon Hays, another resolution to the problem of women's place in a market economy was taking shape. What she calls the "ideology of intensive motherhood" offers society an alternative moral mainspring to the market's values of self-interest, competition, and acquisitiveness.

The ideology of intensive motherhood, as Hays describes it, has three elements. First, a child should have one central caregiver, and it should be the mother, not the father. Second, children and their needs should be at the center of child rearing; mothers should lavish time, energy, and material resources on their children. Last, the child is sacred, so that comparisons of worth between child rearing and any other activity are impossible and morally forbidden.

The principles of intensive motherhood would seem to render mothering especially difficult

for women who also hold down paying jobs. Yet, Hays found, working women try to live up to the ideal of intensive mothering just as much as stay-at-home mothers; and they are more likely than stay-at-home mothers to view home and children as more rewarding than work. Why, Hays asks, does intensive motherhood

themselves to paid work, and fewer women compete with them for jobs); and native-born middle- and upper-class women (norms of appropriate child rearing have been their claim to superiority over the unwashed masses and immigrants). But, Hays insists, men and women—even working women—accept and operate



persist as an ideal in a society where most women work?

Historian Karl Polanyi, in *The Great Transformation*, showed how capitalism's transformation of humans into mobile and fungible elements of labor was a violent wrenching, and how people in eighteenth-century English society created communal mutual aid systems to protect themselves against the brutalities of markets in human labor. Hays argues—quite brilliantly—that the ideology and practice of motherhood are likewise a counterforce to the marketization of all of social life and "the last best defense against . . . the impoverishment of social ties, communal obligations, and unrewarded commitments." Sure, the ideology serves the interests of capitalists (women are more likely to accept lower wages in the market if they believe they have more important work to do at home); men (they get maid service on a grand scale so they can dedicate

according to the values of intensive motherhood because doing so is a way of actively rejecting the supremacy of market logic inside the family.

### TO WORK OR NOT?

It's conventional wisdom nowadays that most women have to work out of economic necessity, if not as the sole or primary breadwinner, at least to be able to keep up their standard of living in an economy of declining real wages. Yet, there are still a lot of pressures on women (even mothers without husbands) *not* to work. For one thing, the organization of work is hostile to family life and responsibilities. Work takes time from family life. Inflexible work schedules make it difficult for parents to respond to unscheduled needs of kids like sickness or emotional crises. Overtime, travel, irregular hours, sudden shift changes, and just too much work—all wreak havoc

on child care arrangements, not to mention parent-child relationships. The magazines are full of stories of women committed to combining work and motherhood who get shipwrecked on the shoals of work.

The more interesting—and sobering—explanations of why women work or don't are cultural

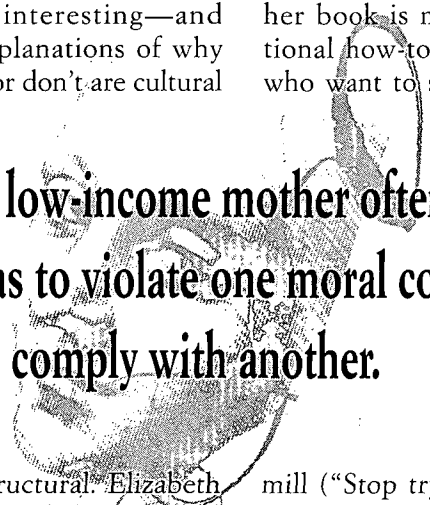
empty or both, so they reclaim their values by cutting back, quitting altogether, or making a career change.

While McKenna calls for the usual panoply of family-friendly policies and reformed fathers, her book is mainly an inspirational how-to guide for people who want to step off the tread-

in turn perpetuate the notion of the "maternal sculptress."

From the psychologists and pediatricians, the torch of "mother-blame" is picked up by social scientists, politicians, pundits, and lawyers, who blame working mothers for just about everything that can go wrong with children and society. Riots, delinquency, crime, drug addiction, homelessness, even terrorism have been pinned on single mothers, divorced mothers, welfare mothers, teen mothers. Note that women in any of these categories almost always have to work to support themselves and their kids, so they are guilty from the get-go. They can't possibly be the dedicated, full-time, by-the-book, meet-your-child's-every-need mothers the culture reveres. Even as politicians are telling them that they are irresponsible and not entitled to public aid just for taking care of their kids, the scientific establishment tells them they are bad mothers if they go to work. The courts are even more threatening, what with judges occasionally removing kids from a mother on grounds that her work prevents her from taking adequate care of them.

The tensions between being a good mother and a good worker affect different social classes differently. A minority of affluent women can participate more intensively in their children's lives or balance work and family with the aid of domestic help. But the vast majority of working women can't purchase their way to balancing work, family, and personal fulfillment. Perhaps this explains why business and political elites have so little sympathy for the cross pressures on work-



## A low-income mother often has to violate one moral code to comply with another.

rather than structural. Elizabeth McKenna, who inhabits a world of professional women in relatively high-powered jobs, sees a trend for some of these women to quit because they find their work unsatisfying. In her book, *When Work Doesn't Work Anymore*, she says that a clash of male and female value systems is what sends these women packing. Women brought up under the influence of postwar feminism still carry the traditional expectations of their mothers and grandmothers; they want to have a personal life, a family, and a community role. They find themselves in a male work system, where work comes before personal life and personal success is equated with work success, and before long they're judging themselves by their boss's standards—attendance, long hours, productivity, and ability to suppress their feelings. By the time they hit their professional stride in their thirties or forties, they're fed up or

mill ("Stop trying to be so successful" and "Live by what you treasure" are two of her "new rules for success"), not a blueprint for reforming work. McKenna's rules might offer some directions for a cultural change, however, and that would be all to the good. Unfortunately, many of her rules are practical mainly for women who have high earning power, big savings, or a husband to fall back on.

For Diane Eyer, author of *Motherguilt*, it's not the attractions of a female value system that draw women out of the workforce, but rather a culture of blaming mothers that drives them out. Blame starts with academic psychologists, some of whom transformed the idea of maternal-infant bonding into a requirement for healthy child development that could be met only by exclusive, maternal, stay-at-home care. This dubious scientific claim undergirds the child-rearing manuals, and they



---

ing parents. (John Clendenin, chairman of BellSouth, recently told a reporter for *Fortune* magazine, "People have always had to make choices about balancing work and family. It has always been a personal issue, and individuals have to solve it.")

### THE POOR PAY MORE

The vise of cultural contradictions squeezes low-income women especially hard. Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein set out to learn how low-income single mothers cope with this dilemma and how they choose between welfare and work. Edin and Lein interviewed close to 400 women in 4 cities, half of them "wage reliant" and half of them "welfare reliant." In *Making Ends Meet*, they came up with a vivid and detailed picture of how women survive in both situations (they all do lots of things they aren't supposed to do by society's laws, rules, and morals) and how these women think about their own moral choices (they all want to be good mothers and good providers, and they struggle constantly to reconcile the two).

Wage work actually diminishes poor women's ability to be good mothers. It prevents them from keeping their kids safe. Keeping children out of danger, at least the kinds of dangers that confront poor kids, is something middle-class moms can take for granted while they worry about language acquisition, learning disabilities, and emotional development. Poor mothers worry all the time about their kids' exposure to gangs and drugs, the seductiveness of selling drugs as a way to afford the things they covet, the temptation to skip

school, the possibilities of getting pregnant (none of the mothers worried about their sons impregnating anyone, as far as I could tell), the risks of their apartment catching fire. Many mothers go to elaborate lengths to assure their children's safety while they are at work. One held fire drills every night after supper. The best way, and sometimes only way, to keep their kids out of these kinds of trouble is to stay home with them.

There are two other big reasons why the responsible choice for a low-income single mother might be welfare rather than work. Welfare provides health insurance for her children, and most low-wage jobs don't. And welfare, however miserly, provides security that most jobs don't—at least it did before 1997. In the jobs available to many low-skilled or unskilled women, such as fast food or home health care, workers can never be sure of getting enough hours to make enough money while they have a job, and they are always subject to firing or layoffs. When insecurity doesn't just mean a little less of something but the possibility of starvation or homelessness, the rational risk-benefit calculation counsels taking the secure but less rewarding option.

Why, then, do any poor, single mothers work, especially when, as Edin and Lein demonstrate, wage-reliant mothers usually come out financially way behind welfare-reliant mothers? They work because they accept the dominant political culture. They work, in spite of being materially worse off than on welfare, because when you go to welfare,

"they treat you like an animal just because you need a little help getting back on your feet." They work because "it makes you feel good to know you have a job."

The low-income single mothers who do work, Lein and Edin found, worked also because special circumstances lowered their costs of working. They had fewer or older children, or free child care from relatives, or day care subsidies, or free or low-cost rent. Several working women had quit better paying jobs for ones with lower pay in order to get better benefits or an employer more sympathetic to child care responsibilities.

Very often, a low-income mother has to violate one moral code in order to comply with another. She may have to engage in off-the-books work and lie to the welfare office to be a good provider, or she may have to be a less reliable or punctual worker to be a good nurse to her kids, or she may have to neglect her kids' health and welfare in order to be a good worker. Working and motherhood rope low-income women in a tangle of moral double binds.

### GOOD WORK AND BAD

Laundry may be the epitome of drudge work. In India until quite recently, the lowest social caste of all, even lower than the Untouchables, was the group who did the Untouchables' laundry. To *Joy My Work*, Tera Hunter's study of African-American laundresses and domestics in Atlanta after the Civil War, puts dirty work in a wholly different light. In most of the nation, domestic work was all there was for a black woman. In the Atlanta of 1880, 98 percent of wage-earn-

ing black women were domestics. But to a people inspired to wrest genuine freedom from a still-paper victory, the kind of domestic work everyone else considered drudge offered important moral possibilities. Work was the means to a precious self-sufficiency and a concrete bridge to the abstract

am] gwine to be cook ob dis ere house, and I'se want no white woman to trouble me. . . . We done claned dishes all our days, long before ye Yankees hearn tell of us, and now does ye suppose I gwine to give up all my rights to ye, just cause youse a Yankee white woman?"

## People make their own moral meanings in their work. Workers pursue autonomy, even in the most inauspicious conditions.

ideal of freedom. Hunter demonstrates just what was at stake in a bundle of dirty clothes: "Black women's success or frustrations in influencing the character of domestic labor would define how meaningful freedom would be."

Fought at every turn by their white employers, black domestics made their own rules about work—their schedules, their total hours, their duties, their pay. Through what was quaintly called "pan-toting," they adjusted their compensation to accord with their own sense of justice. Cooks took leftovers, perhaps even a few staples, from the kitchen. Laundresses held onto a client's dressy outfit for an extra week so that they or their children might wear it for a special occasion. Most importantly, domestics claimed their expertise and authority by maintaining control over their methods. One cook, accustomed to the detached kitchens of southern homes, disagreed with her Yankee employer's order to wash the dishes in the sitting room. "[I

In America after the Civil War, the job of laundress was relatively autonomous, and since it was typically done in the woman's own home or at communal washtubs, it was rather more accommodating to women's child care responsibilities and community activities. Perhaps for that reason, laundresses were able to form a trade union, stage a strike, and credibly threaten a general strike of domestics on the eve of Atlanta's 1881 International Cotton Exposition. Laundering was still drudge work, still backbreaking, demeaning, and unremunerative, but these laundresses found their dignity and mustered deep personal and collective strength in washing on their own terms.

Much of social theorizing about work holds that different kinds of jobs impart different moral possibilities to workers, and that dignity and control are mostly inherent qualities of occupations. Hunter's depiction of black domestics reminds us that to a

large extent, people make their own moral meanings in their work, and that autonomy is something workers can exert, even in the most inauspicious conditions.

**A**s Hunter shows, even the worst kinds of jobs can be "good work" if people make them part of a struggle to achieve larger ideals. In *The Time Bind*, Arlie Hochschild explores another way work can be good: It might come to take the place of home and family in people's emotional and moral lives.

Hochschild studied employees of a large company that offered about as many family-friendly work options as you're likely to find anywhere. She wanted to solve a puzzle: Why do employees eligible for such options gravitate to those that help them spend more time at work (such as on-site child care, child and elder care referral services, and emergency backup child care) and make scant use of family leaves, part-time work, job sharing, and other programs that enable them to spend more time at home? And why do so many people who otherwise complain about being stressed out by the demands of work and family request so much overtime?

For all of the company's lip-service to its "Work-Life-Balance" program, top and middle managers continued to judge employees by their willingness to put in long hours. Even those people most staunchly committed to more balanced lives knew that reducing their work time would be a certain career killer. But why didn't people put up more resistance to the company's pull on

their time? For many people, Hochschild found, work has become the place where they get their sense of self-worth, their sense of belonging to a community and of being needed, of giving and getting help, and their sense of growth, accomplishment, and recognition. Many workers—men and women, executives, middle managers, and production line workers—feel they are better people at work than at home, better friends to their co-workers and better fathers or mothers to their subordinates than they are to their children. People often feel more competent, powerful, and appreciated at work than at home.

Hochschild doesn't pretend that this reversal of the place of work and home in people's emotional lives describes the majority of the people she studied—at

most, perhaps a quarter of them fit this new model. Nor does she explore class differences in how work might operate as a sanctuary and home as a site of oppression. But she does illuminate an important piece of moral terrain, the terrain where people make choices about how much time to spend with their families and how much to spend at work. And while she's out exploring that terrain, she has some disturbing insights about how people experience time at home.

For many people the family has been transformed beyond Christine Frederick's wildest dreams. People have Taylorized their relationships, not just their tasks. Time has become the hard currency of the family economy and there's a whole moral code about how family members earn it, save it, invest it, bargain with

it, and borrow it on credit. A man goes fishing on Saturday morning knowing he's leaving his working wife with kid duty, but he forgives himself by telling himself he "earned that time" away from family. A woman requests overtime as her way of "sneaking free time" without having to negotiate for it with her husband or kids. A parent avoids spending time with a child by promising an IOU of future time. Much of family time is regulated as scheduled appointments, and time between appointments is felt as squandered. Sadly, many parents know only those aspects of their children's lives that fit into pre-arranged time slots—the soccer games, dance recitals, school plays, and medical appointments.

The "work/family dilemma," as it's called in policy circles, is

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usually portrayed as something that can be ameliorated by adjusting work schedules and providing services to cover for adults, especially women, while they're on duty at work. Hochschild sees a more profound dilemma. It is not so much about having enough time, using it more efficiently, better balancing demands on one's time, or finding ways to get family tasks accomplished. It's about how we live in time, whether we are present in our acts and our relationships, and who or what we're present for.

Hochschild is all in favor of family-friendly policies and she thinks more employers should have more of them, notwith-

ideas from every corner—academics like Juliet Schor and Lotte Bailyn, the “voluntary simplicity” movement, the old “eight-hour day movement”—she drafts a blueprint for a national “time movement.” Her ideas won't solve the dilemma anytime soon, but they are the stuff of which important change is made.

**I**t's hard to find a good woman because we live with a whole series of incompatible moral constructions of women and work. Deeply embedded in our history is a traditionalist view that assigns women a life project of cultivating domesticity. Add an overlay of scientific child rearing

the view that it would be better if poor mothers didn't have to work with a theory that the poor, women included, would benefit from the discipline of hard work. Add a recent welfare reform that tells poor mothers they had better be good providers—but not neglect the kids. Juxtapose the reverence for dull and dirty jobs with the stigmatization of people who do them.

The books discussed here all illuminate some aspect of these moral constructions, but they're mostly at a loss about what to do with women. Meanwhile, beyond the bookshelf, we have calls for women to balance their time more effectively (balance is the predominant metaphor in the whole work/family discussion) and calls for employers to balance their needs for competitiveness with respect for employees' family lives. We have calls for poor women to work and work harder, and to be more responsible mothers, and to become mothers less often or not at all, and to put off becoming mothers until they can be good providers.

The over-arching lesson of these books is that women are still subject to conflicting moral imperatives. In addition to advocating changes in government and corporate policies, maybe we—experts, philosophers, and activists, men and women—ought to work on making a big cultural tent in which it's possible to be a good woman and a good worker. Maybe we can accept that different women have different needs and different goals, and aim all prescriptions and policies at helping them figure out how to live well by their own moral lights.□

## We live with a whole series of incompatible moral constructions of women and work.

standing that they may “serve as little more than fig leaves concealing long work-hour cultures.” But she's smart enough to see that without a cultural transformation in our values about time, changes in scheduling and assistance with family care cannot change the ways we are deeply diminished by the cult of efficiency. And she's historically grounded enough to know that cultural transformations don't come out of nowhere. They are always the result of political agency, however inchoate and unforeseen the causal chain might be. So, borrowing good

that declares women are selfish and will destroy their children if they work while their children are young. Add that pregnant women have been deemed unsuitable workers and women generally have been considered unfit for a whole variety of occupations. Add the claim that women's most important work is motherhood, and then reverse it to insist that motherhood doesn't count as real work. Add a feminist revision that says women are the equals of men and real women ought to prove their mettle in challenging careers and community activities. Reconcile

JEDEDIAH S. PURDY

# The Libertarian Conceit

Government is out of fashion. Reporters and pundits describe politicians' statements and actions never as expressions of conviction, always as strategic maneuvers. Increasingly, assuming that politicians are fatuous and suspecting that politics is futile seem requirements for sophistication. With a President who shifts like a political wind sock, a Congress by turns ideological and inchoate, and a pair of parties frankly devoted to fundraising and re-election, it is sometimes hard to recall why it matters so much that the cynics are wrong.

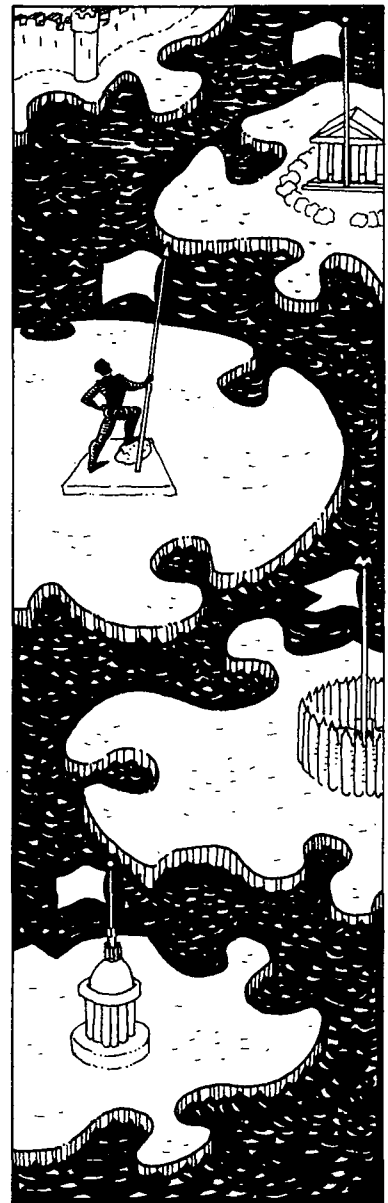
Three new books, all explicitly skeptical toward politics, help to educate and, sometimes against their design, reinforce a commitment to public life. British philosopher and intellectual historian Isaiah Berlin's collection of new essays, *The Sense of Reality*, proposes a way to understand both the virtues and the limits of politics. Right-wing think-tankers Charles Murray and David Boaz see no virtue at all and suggest that we should scotch politics in favor of a minimal state and a maximally free market. Murray's *What It Means To Be a Libertarian: A Personal Interpretation* and Boaz's *Libertarianism: A Primer* make a systematic case for a position that has recently enjoyed renewal.

Reading the books side by side elucidates both the appeal and the basic dishonesty of libertarianism and highlights the importance of wiser responses to skepticism about politics.

Berlin's guiding concern is the relation of knowledge to politics. He proposes that political knowledge—knowledge of persons, institutions, cultures, and the interplay among all of these across time—is fundamentally different from “scientific knowledge.” Berlin suggests that we can have a humane politics only when we have recognized the distinctive character and limits of political knowledge.

Berlin presents the heart of his case in the first three essays of *The Sense of Reality*. He begins by pointing out that every effort to describe political activity in “scientific” terms, through a few simple rules that explain and predict a broad swath of activity, has failed. These efforts range from the Marxist view that society and history are shaped by economic forces to contemporary political scientists' efforts to make sense of politics through models of “rational choice” that purport to describe how perfectly rational individuals would behave. Every one, no matter how confident its description of how things must be, has found that things refuse to be that way.

That reality puts limits on



both political thought and political projects is unsurprising in itself. What is distinctive, Berlin suggests, is that this is a reality that evades complete description. When, say, the reality of physics limits our engineering projects, we can refine our grasp of physical laws and improve our engineering; with valid formulas, we can calculate from blueprints how much weight a bridge will hold, the appropriate width of its girders, and so on. However, we

many individual butterflies." Integrating the elements of this blooming, buzzing confusion means perceiving the patterns formed by their unique conjunction at any moment. There are likely to be many intersecting patterns, and perceiving them adequately means recognizing which of them affect the prospects of some particular political project at a particular historical junction. Knowing politics well is like understanding

We become wise, in Berlin's sense, and so come into political knowledge, by close and constant attention to the specific differences of situations, of institutions, and of human beings.

This distinction between scientific knowledge and political wisdom helps Berlin to make sense of the errors and terrors of twentieth-century politics. He identifies a temptation to order ideal political systems by a few principles—often expressly billed as "scientific"—and then reshape reality in the image of the ideal. The problem with these projects is that ideal systems are blind to "specific differences," and so run roughshod over them. The result is nearly always great disruption, often the reverse of what the planners had envisioned. Designing societies in this manner is like sculpting, or, more exactly, performing surgery, with a bandsaw. Berlin hopes that we can return from these mistakes to an imperfect knowledge that is good of its kind, and the better for being the right kind. His might be called an epistemologically chastened politics, one keenly aware of the dangers in seeking knowledge beyond what we can have. His attitude, then, achieves a specifically skeptical hopefulness toward politics.

Some version of Berlin's doctrine is increasingly ascendant in politics. Yet it is a fluid doctrine, with dangerous potentials. Acknowledging human limits has often been code for acquiescing to all sorts of injustice. British conservatives have long used rhetoric like Berlin's to argue against estab-

#### WORKS DISCUSSED IN THIS ESSAY

Isaiah Berlin, edited by Henry Hardy, *The Sense of Reality: Studies in Ideas and Their History* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997).

David Boaz, *Libertarianism: A Primer* (Free Press, 1997).

Charles Murray, *What It Means to Be a Libertarian: A Personal Interpretation* (Broadway Books, 1997).

can't seem to refine our knowledge of political reality in the same way: It's solid enough when it frustrates our projects, but when we try to put it on a dissecting table, it changes form like Proteus and runs away from us.

Berlin's insight is that there's no trouble here, or, rather, that the trouble is not in politics but in us. In looking for unchanging rules that govern politics, we want more than we can have. There is a kind of knowledge that is possible in politics, but it can't be rendered into formulas. Instead, political knowledge involves "a capacity for integrating a vast amalgam of constantly changing, multicoloured, evanescent, perpetually overlapping data, too many, too swift, too intermingled to be caught and pinned down and labelled like so

how an intimate acquaintance will react to a new setting or event, and not very much like drawing on psychological theorems to predict the behavior of a "personality type" in a generic "type" of situation.

This sort of knowledge requires a training, and sometimes a gift, of perception, and is nearer wisdom than erudition. As Berlin puts it, "what makes men foolish or wise, understanding or blind, as opposed to knowledgeable or learned or well informed, is the perception of these unique flavours of each situation as it is, in its specific differences." These "specific differences" are the features of situations that are immune to generalization, and which can only be distorted by an effort to render them as "scientific" knowledge.



lishing a written constitution, which would necessarily order particularity by principle. More perniciously, doctrines of necessary human imperfection have a long history of use against social reform, which conservatives styled hubristic. Now, libertarians are making a play for the mantle of a chastened politics. Only they, Murray and Boaz insist, have learned and can apply the hard lessons of the twentieth century.

In this claim, Murray and Boaz follow the late Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek, whose work makes up the social science pillar of libertarianism as Ayn Rand provides its dubious literary support. Hayek proposed that human affairs are too diverse, complex, and unpredictable to benefit from the generic quality of central planning. From this sound insight, with its plain affinity with Berlin, Hayek drew the view that state involvement in citizens' lives should be minimal and always suspect. Boaz follows Hayek with his claim that "[libertarians'] commitment to the full protection of individual rights and a strictly limited government reflects their fundamental humility." Murray similarly insists that the Great Society ambition of eliminating poverty overstepped the realistic limits of politics. Both claim for libertarians the cachet of the sage grown wise through chastening experience.

A fair question to put to these two books, then, is whether they

succeed in meeting the challenge to politics that Berlin has issued and that they appear to take up. Is libertarianism the outcome of a chastened commitment to observing "specific differences"? Is this the mature face of what Berlin calls wisdom? And, if not, what is in fact the motivating spirit of libertarianism?

Murray's and Boaz's answers are nearly identical at their core. Both lay out a simple scheme of libertarian commitments, stage a merciless assault on government, and take some time to sketch policy proposals. The chief difference resides in the authors' tones. Murray is concise and suave, presenting a superficially lucid account in 170 short pages. He is also a touch precious, heading his sections with such Victorianisms as "In which are considered the circumstances

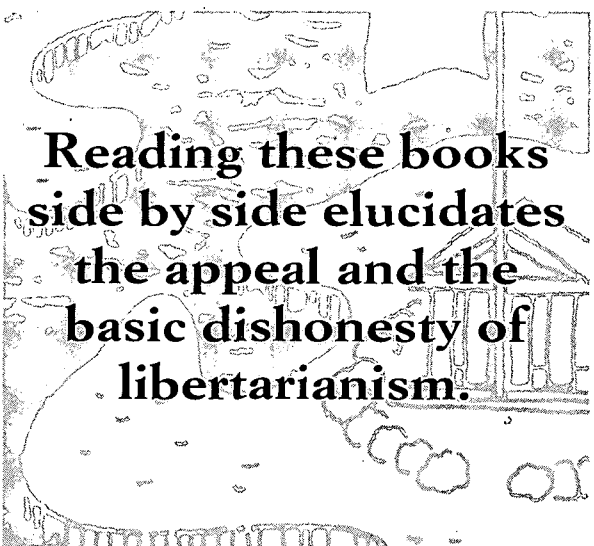
He also displays a wheezing aspiration to breeziness, invoking pop-culture figures including humorist Dave Barry and musicians Pearl Jam and Alanis Morissette. Forced contemporaneity is the surest evidence that a book's author does not expect it to last. Murray's book is ironically the better primer, while Boaz's uneven writing displays a choleric temperament that makes his work more "personal" than Murray's monograph.

**F**or both authors, libertarianism starts in a view of freedom as the right of self-ownership: We are our own inviolable property, free to do what we will in the world. What we will usually consists of pursuing happiness, which Boaz defines as reflective satisfaction with one's life.

Because everybody enjoys self-ownership, each is restricted by others' freedom, and barred from harming or defrauding anyone else. This is the only restriction on our freedom. Our liberty stops when it interferes with others' liberty.

Unsurprisingly, a bunch of self-owning individuals generally finds that it wants to coordinate its actions, lest the busy proprietors stumble over each other

in pursuing happiness. Coordination happens through contracts, free agreements to give up some freedom in order to cooperate to mutual advantage. Because a free individual will give up freedom only if she expects cooperation to



**Reading these books  
side by side elucidates  
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basic dishonesty of  
libertarianism.**

under which limited government might be restored," and, with the swagger of a Kipling, titling one chapter "The Stuff of Life." By contrast, Boaz needs 300 word-dense pages to get out a position no more subtle than Murray's.

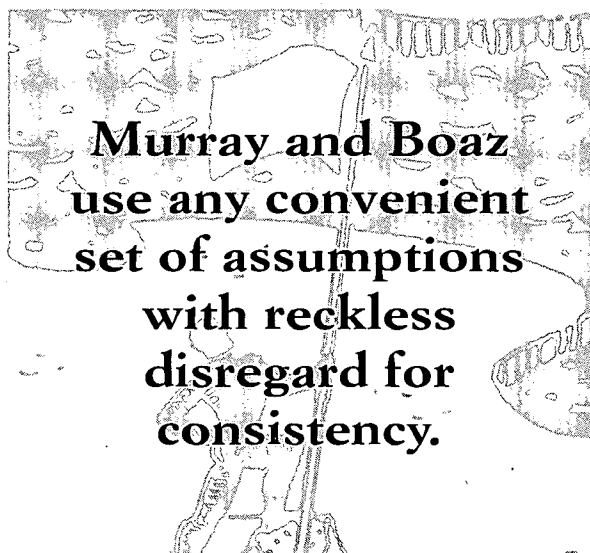
make her happy, whatever contracts people arrange are, by definition, the ones best suited to advance everybody's happiness. If other contracts would make people happier, people would enter into those contracts instead.

In this picture, government is unique because it holds coercive power that no one has freely contracted to acknowledge. Any government action, from taxation to regulation, is an imposition from outside on individuals' freedom. Accordingly, government is massively suspect. Libertarians charily grant the state three functions. The first two are upholding natural rights by punishing those who harm or defraud others—thus violating their self-ownership—and enforcing freely agreed contracts. The third is paying for public goods, goods that wouldn't be produced by the market but nonetheless advance everyone's pursuit of happiness. Interstate highways are the stock example, while education, although it plainly discomforts both authors, remains in the fold.

The policy results of this stance are unsurprising. Replace school funding with vouchers, for all families in Murray's picture, for the poor in Boaz's. Supplant Social Security and government aid to the poor with individual savings and private charity. End regulation of industry, hoping that self-regulating agencies on the order of the American Bar Association will appear

to reassure wary consumers with "stamps of approval" for products. Abolish antidiscrimination legislation, instead letting racist and sexist employers suffer the economic consequences of reducing their pools of potential workers. People will freely enter into the contracts that best advance their happiness while preserving their rights.

Contrary to their common-sense rhetoric, Murray and Boaz veer from dogmatism to sophistry



with nary a pause in the field of "specific differences." First the dogmatism: Both books rest on a persistent, willful obtuseness to the reality of economic coercion. Murray boldly declares, "There is no such thing as intellectual or emotional or economic force." His aim here is to establish that all contractual relations—and sexual and other relations, for that matter—are consensual, and so legitimate, unless one participant has a knife at the other's throat. One result of this principle is that government has no business involving itself in labor

relations. So long as companies don't actually set goons on their workers, fair wages will prevail and, if workers for some reason want a union, they can form one—if they don't mind being fired in the attempt. In the end, competing preferences will balance out, and the right contracts will prevail.

Here the libertarian case is so disingenuous as to be offensive. There is no symmetry in the situations facing workers and firms:

To the worker, the loss of a job is often far more of a threat than the loss of one worker is to the firm. The reality of economic coercion leads people to contract into situations that, although they are indeed the "happiest" arrangements available, are nonetheless miserable. In any real economy—and, remember, the libertarian economy lacks any social safety net, making workers' positions more parlous than now—Murray's denial

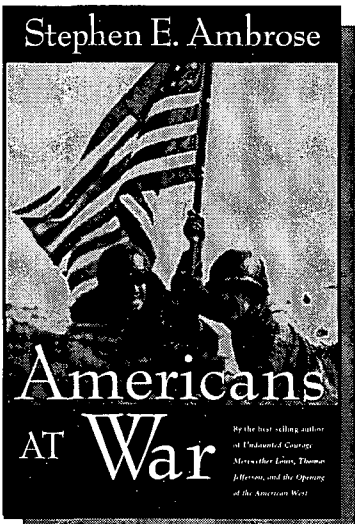
of economic power is a delusion.

As power tilts economic exchanges, so money can corrupt political power. Here Murray and Boaz's vision of a government proudly committed to defending basic liberties is particularly implausible. Their society would be one of vast differences in economic power, which have always translated into vast differences in political power. Only the libertarian faith in a minimal state would limit the use of political power by the economically dominant for their own benefit. If only faith were so powerful.

**T**he dogmatism is bad enough, but Murray and Boaz are equally sophisticated, willing to use any convenient set of assumptions with reckless disregard for consistency. This slipperiness goes to libertarianism's deepest premises. In describing the behavior of government, Murray and Boaz assume that people are basically greedy and unprincipled. In describing society outside of government, especially libertarian society, they assume that people are essentially generous and moral. In a polemical chapter entitled "What Big Government Is All About," Boaz explains most social policy as a matter of self-interested bureaucrats expanding their fiefdoms by identifying "social problems" and winning funds to address them. Sounding like a far-right Noam Chomsky, he even describes public (or, as he calls it, "state") television as publicizing alleged inequities in order to justify increased social spending by the "ruling class" in Washington, which also, of course, funds state TV. Never mind that PBS is funded by Trent Lott and Exxon.

Both Murray and Boaz, after painting government employees in the most venal terms, offer rosy predictions of the resurgence of private charity once government safety nets are entirely withdrawn. Boaz chirrups, "Charities will step up to the plate. They always have." Murray is similarly cavalier, asserting that a spirit of generous, efficient charity "is the way America really is." They want to have it both ways. But if people are mean and selfish, the prospects for charities

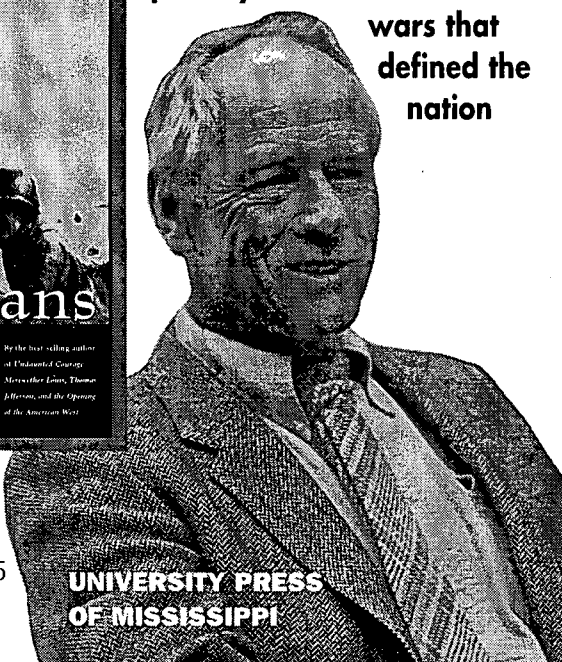
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are grim. And if they are at least sometimes responsive to the interests of others, politics and public life may express those concerns in the form of government programs.

Of course, the truth is that people are both charitable and self-interested, in varying degrees in varying circumstances. Governments, and public intellectuals like Murray and Boaz, help to shape these circumstances. Murray openly celebrates walled communities with private services and undemocratic charters as proof that "freedom works." In these settings we find our "little platoons," the small, voluntary circles of friends and loved ones that make up the real scope of our moral obligation. Of course, nothing works against

the solidarity that encourages charity like residential isolation.

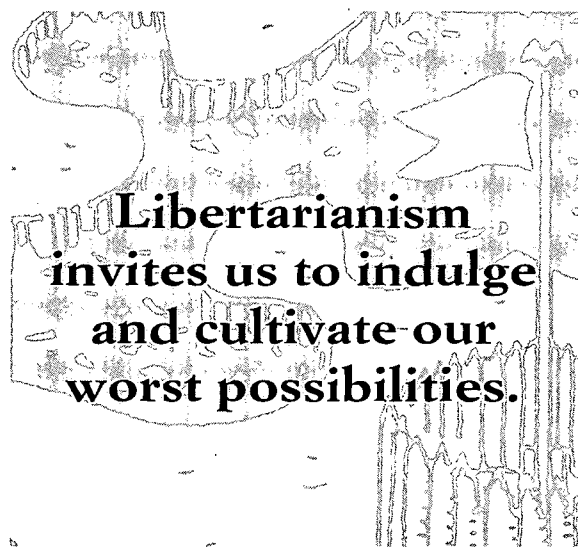
**D**espite these patent weaknesses, libertarian strains are increasingly influential in our culture and politics. Witness recent debates over poverty policy, Social Security, and education. The whole explanation cannot lie in the wealth of the right-wing think tanks where Murray, Boaz, and others are housed and fed. Intellectual quarrels with libertarianism, then, are not enough. Rather, we should ask a further question: What is the spirit of the position? What attitude, what blend of desire, fear, and prejudice makes this marriage of dogma and sophistry compelling?



Above all, libertarianism is deaf to the appeal of democratic freedom. The notion that we might make a better society for everyone through public remedy strikes libertarians as interference with market efficiency. The idea that legislation might not only increase the sum of individual utility, but provide a further good that inheres in democratic self-governance, strikes them as authoritarian. Yet these are the defining humane aspirations of a democratic society; they make democracy not just a protection against tyranny but a way to better the lives of all citizens.

To understand this deafness to and distaste for democracy, it helps to return to a figure whom libertarians love to invoke but balk at understanding. Boaz devotes several pages to Alexis de Tocqueville's warnings against centralized government, as does Murray in an earlier work, *In Pursuit of Happiness and Good Government*. They are right to point out that Tocqueville mistrusted central governments, but they conveniently forget the full scope of his reasons. Tocqueville saw the moral power of democracy as residing in the institutions of collective self-rule. By participating in the discussions of government—exemplified by the New England town meeting—citizens came to feel the force of others' interests and concerns and developed a commitment, however fragile, to self-rule. In pri-

vate self-concern he saw the seeds of an atrophy of the democratic spirit that could lead to eventual despotism. In short, he feared the libertarian citizens that Murray and Boaz evoke. Indeed, he coined the term "individualism" to describe the tendency "which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends."



These people, Tocqueville warned, "form the habit of thinking of themselves in isolation and imagine that their whole destiny is in their own hands. . . . Each man is forever thrown back on himself alone, and there is danger that he may be shut up in the solitude of his own heart." For Tocqueville, this condition was a kind of infantilism. With their talk of radically free individuals, little platoons, lifestyle enclaves, and a deeply voluntary civil society, Murray and Boaz celebrate this same infantilism. The temper of their libertarianism is extra-democratic because it arises

from a vision of each person as having his worth and satisfactions entirely "in the solitude of his own heart."

Libertarianism, then, is less a philosophical proposal than a political and cultural invitation. It invites us to indulge and cultivate our worst possibilities: disgust and despair at government, a retreat into lifestyle enclaves, and a surrender of the democratic hope of collectively improving all of society. Moreover, it sanctions a new dogmatism in its cynical (if inconsistent) view of human motivation and its perfectly consistent obtuseness to economic coercion.

Progressives can hardly afford to take the libertarians' invitation lightly. Our task is in part to show that a politics without formulas and with no ambition to perfection can still be a politics of vital action and earned hope. The shape of these efforts cannot be settled in advance. In every case, the progressive task will require a cultivation of the sort of political judgment that Berlin describes, a sense of the best and the worst that are possible at any moment and an apprehension of how to bring about one rather than the other. Our competition is the libertarian proposal to give up on government altogether, and to introduce a new dogma in the name of freedom and humility. If we do not make a compelling case for an imperfect politics, we may well be thrown back on ourselves alone, whether we believe in libertarianism or not. □

*continued from page 13*

At the very least, tenants would applaud the CHA for its honesty. And maybe then the hard work of your administration will be more appreciated.

## **RELIGION OR SAFETY NET?**

To the Editors:

In "The Other Civic America" [May-June 1997], Andrew Greeley proposes that rates of volunteering are substantially accounted for by levels of religious involvement. Greeley fails to address whether the increase in voluntarism from 1981 to 1990 coincides with an increase in religious participation. If no such trend occurred, perhaps changes in larger socioeconomic conditions—not a high degree of church attendance and membership in church organizations—have spurred people to donate their time. There is little discussion in Greeley's essay concerning the implicit catalyst that compels one to volunteer time: recognition that a situation exists that requires one's participation. Greeley argues that nations with greater concentrations of religiously active people will experience higher rates of voluntarism. Yet his conclusions seem to rely on the supposition that there is a cross-cultural uniformity of social needs.

What if the observed cross-cultural difference in voluntarism is intertwined with the ways in which governments themselves address social concerns? After all, governments spend varying amounts on their social safety nets. It is well understood that in the United States during the period of time in which Greeley notes a rise in voluntarism, the gap between the rich

and the poor grew, real wages fell, unemployment reached its highest levels since World War II, and social spending as a percentage of the gross domestic product declined. If such hardships did not occur in the other nations cited in his study, then the data that show that the United States is only one of three nations to experience a significant change in the proportion of volunteering might be rather predictable. Might we not expect that in nations where people are left less vulnerable by economic upheavals, the need for—and correspondingly, the incidences of—voluntarism will be minimized? In other words, the ways in which different nations' governments address social concerns could be an independent variable affecting volunteer rates.

Even if other countries were as religious as the U.S., they may have a lower need for volunteer efforts to supplement social programs. Until further investigations more clearly rule out other intervening variables that might affect the relationship between voluntarism and religious participation, implications of the latter's influence should be tempered.

*Brian Gifford  
San Francisco, California*

## **Andrew Greeley responds:**

Brian Gifford is badly confused and thus confusing. He consistently fails to distinguish between two comparisons—the first between the United States and European volunteer rates, and the second between the United States in the 1980s and the 1990s. Indeed, he jumps back and forth between these two issues with such dizzying

speed that it would seem that he cannot clearly distinguish between them.

I wished to establish in my article that (a) the level of volunteering in the United States is higher than in the rest of the world (despite talk about the decline of civic virtue and social capital), and that (b) the difference in levels of volunteering between the United States (and Canada) and the European countries is almost entirely attributable to different levels of religious involvement. This is a statistically demonstrated fact. I also wanted to make it clear that the present level of American volunteering does not represent a historical decline—in fact, it's an increase.

Mr. Gifford wants passionately to explain both my comparisons—between the United States and Europe, and between the United States in the 1980s and the United States in the 1990s—by the weakness of the American safety net. In fact, if he had looked closely at the data, he would have noted that the second rank of countries, just after the North American countries, are the Scandinavian countries, who have the best safety net of any country in the sample. Moreover, I have developed safety net indices from United Nations publications (using, for example, per capita income spent on welfare and budget proportion spent on welfare) for all the countries in the sample and found no correlations between any of these data and volunteering.

## **FAMILIES IN FLUX**

To the Editors:

In their responses ["Family Feud," July-August 1997, and "Family Trouble," September-

October 1997] to Arlene Skolnick's article ["Family Values: The Sequel," May-June 1997] David Blankenhorn, Maggie Gallagher, Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, and David Popenoe argue that their crusade against divorce lies in the progressive tradition of activism for children. In fact, however, it's a substitute for such activism. Ignoring how much and how irreversibly the role of marriage has changed, these writers offer impractical advice to "reverse the culture of divorce" or "rewrite the script" of marriage. They avoid fighting for concrete issues such as paid parental leaves, high-quality child care and after-school programs, jobs and housing programs for our cities, or restraints on the power of business.

The decline of marriage as the primary vehicle for organizing people's lives and redistributing resources to young and old is a long-term historical trend, connected to the rise in women's economic independence and the decline in society's coercive controls over personal life. Today's divorce rate is exactly where you'd expect it to be on the basis of trends during the first half of the century. The rate of unmarried childbearing tripled between 1940 and 1958, well before the "permissive" 1960s. Fifty percent of today's children live in some family form other than a married-couple family with both biological parents in the home.

Blankenhorn and Gallagher say we shouldn't be "servile before the facts of family fragmentation," citing labor organizers and civil rights activists who battled the status quo. But such reformers didn't urge employers and segregationists to rewrite their scripts or improve

their values. They sought legal and institutional restraints on behavior. If family crusaders truly believe that family form is a structural source of inequality on the same order as class and race (and Blankenhorn claims it has eclipsed class and race as the source of inequality), then they should stop waffling and join the right in attacking nontraditional families and the programs that permit them to function.

The crusaders have placed themselves on a slippery slope, at the bottom of which lies repressive and discriminatory social policy. While Whitehead still perches precariously near the top, Popenoe has slid into attacking the "pathology" of inner-city families. Blankenhorn supports housing and credit discrimination against unmarried parents; Gallagher recently denounced the Boy Scouts for not condemning the "crimes" of parents who divorce.

While two cooperative, hands-on parents are a tremendous advantage for children, there is no magic to having *any* two parents in the home. Almost everyone admits that kids are better off out of a conflict-ridden marriage. Yet parents who are disengaged from their children—not even abusive or hostile—can also be problematic for kids. One recent study of teens found overall self-image was not affected by family form. The teens with the lowest self-esteem were those in intact families where the father showed little interest in the youth.

It's true that divorce can exacerbate pre-existing problems or trigger new ones if it leads to increased conflict, depression of the custodial parent, or income loss. But why isn't the "pro-child"

movement concerned about the full range of "structural conditions" that create risks for kids? Unemployment and financial insecurity are as likely to disorder parenting as marital separation. Elevated levels of lead in the blood are more predictive of violence and dropping out of school than divorce is. Good child care and paid parental leaves can make the employment of mothers a boon to child development, but inadequately funded and regulated child care is a risk to kids that requires federal action now.

Persistent poverty in the first five years of life leaves a child with an average IQ deficit of nine points, regardless of family structure. According to the Centers for Disease Control, poverty plays a greater role than single parenthood in infant mortality and in chronic poor health among children. And we can't blame poverty on divorce or unwed motherhood. In 1995, Tufts University researchers reviewing 73 separate scholarly studies concluded that most poverty comes from America's race and income structures, not its family structures. France, with higher rates of unemployment, slightly higher rates of single motherhood, and a comparable percentage of minorities in the population, has a child poverty rate of 6 percent, compared to America's 22 percent.

If Blankenhorn and the other crusaders will add these issues to their campaign for improving the quality and duration of marriage, I'll sign on, provided they also support measures for making divorce less adversarial and economically wrenching when it does occur and for publicizing research



that shows how almost any kind of family can minimize its characteristic vulnerabilities and build on its potential resources. Failing that, Blankenhorn, Gallagher, and Popenoe should join the conservative camp where they belong.

Stephanie Coontz  
Olympia, Washington

## MARAUDING MARKETS

To the Editors:

Your September-October 1997 issue was full of interesting information and insight. There was David Barringer's account of how professional sports teams extort huge sums of money from cities with the empty promise that they will provide jobs and tax revenues. There was Marc Rodwin's perceptive argument that "exit," the only protest response available in the market, is not nearly as appropriate or as useful as "voice" in the health care domain. This was accompanied by Arnold Relman's decisively critical review of a book proposing to make health care even more market-driven than it currently is. And there was Alan Wolfe's discussion of the moral significance of work to people's lives and of how most analyses miss this by treating work as a "disutility."

I want to point out that there is a common theme that unites these apparently disparate issues, and it is this: If we let markets get too close to the things we value, we can be virtually certain that much of what we value in these things will be destroyed. Even in domains in which markets are effective and inefficient in the short run, they can be counted on to have per-

verse—even disastrous—effects in the long run. *TAP* co-editor Robert Kuttner makes this point in his recent book, *Everything for Sale*, but I think even his fairly relentless attack on markets as the solution to all problems underestimates the magnitude of their destructive potential.

One of the reasons that markets can have such destructive effects is that when people believe the assumptions about a self-interested and calculating human nature on which they are based, social institutions and individual behavior are slowly forced to conform to those assumptions. The result is that human impulses that might restrain and control savage market behavior get crowded out. The argument is too complex to spell out in a letter, but readers might look at a recent article by George Soros in the February 1997 *Atlantic*, at Fred Hirsch's monumental work *Social Limits to Growth* (1976), and, if I can be permitted a little self-promotion, at my *The Costs of Living* (1994), which incidentally has chapters on the commercialization of sports, the marketization of medicine, and the "demeaning" of work.

Unless people realize that many of our current social problems are manifestations of a single underlying disease—the "market"—they won't be looking for cures in the right places. Indeed, what mostly seems to be happening these days is the search for cures using the very remedy that in the long run makes the disease get worse.

Barry Schwartz  
Professor of Psychology  
Swarthmore College  
Swarthmore, Pennsylvania

## GROWTH FOR WHAT?

To the Editors:

"Can't we go faster?"

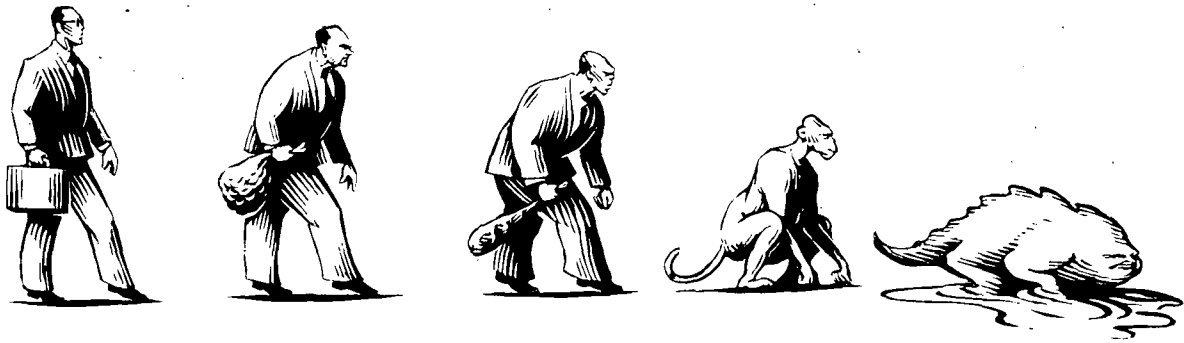
That growth should be the aim of all economic planning is rarely questioned. That economies cannot grow forever on a planet of finite size would seem obvious. When will we reach the limits to growth? Some people believe that we already have already passed them. For instance, the University of British Columbia Task Force on Sustainable Communities estimates that we are already using 30 percent more resources than the earth can sustainably supply. Other estimates also suggest that we have already reached the limits of growth.

Gross domestic product (GDP) is a poor measure of human welfare. Disasters such as Hurricane Andrew and the Exxon Valdez oil spill are added in as if they enhanced our well-being. A group called Redefining Progress has produced a new measure called the "Genuine Progress Indicator" (GPI) in which those things contrary to human well-being are subtracted instead of added.

While the GDP has risen steadily from 1950 at \$8,000 per head (in 1982 dollars) to nearly \$17,000 in 1995, the GPI rose only from \$6,000 in 1950 to \$7,000 in 1970, and has steadily declined to about \$4,000 today (in 1982 dollars). In fact growth has done us more harm than good since 1970.

It may be that in Adam Smith's day, the "invisible hand" or the "magic of the market" contributed to the general welfare. If the authors of the GPI are anywhere near correct, it is true no longer.

Quentin G. Whishaw  
Gulfport, Florida



## PASS THE MALICE

Five mistakes in a single sentence must be some kind of record for America's greatest newspaper. On August 17, in an article about the new White House roles of Sidney Blumenthal and Paul Begala ("Clinton Looks for Inspiration From the Left"), the *New York Times* quoted the *New Republic* as saying about Blumenthal, "A beat is just an assignment but a slut is who you've become maybe."

The next day the *Times* admitted the following:

1. The statement had not appeared in the *New Republic*.
2. The statement was not a reference to Blumenthal.
3. The source of the statement was, in fact, Blumenthal himself.
4. The statement comes from a work of fiction written by Blumenthal—it is a line in a play, spoken by a reporter bemoaning his own career.
5. The word "slut" was actually "slot."

What does the *Times* say when it has twisted a man's own words into an insult supposedly directed at him? It says there was an "editing error." No apology necessary.

As if this weren't bad enough,

the same day the *Times* made these mistakes it also carried a story about the Drudge Report, a gossip sheet on the Internet, written by Matthew Drudge. The focus of the story was Drudge's admission that he published a totally fabricated charge against a new White House employee—none other than Sidney Blumenthal. The charge, according to Drudge, came from "top GOP operatives." "I think I've been had," Drudge said to the *Washington Post*—yet another in the great tradition of aggressors who portray themselves as victims.

Thus does the rising drudge abide by a simple credo: Malice toward all, charity for none—except for himself.

## STOP US BEFORE WE LEGISLATE AGAIN

You remember the great virtue of the flat tax. It was supposed to simplify the federal tax system, make compliance easier, and prevent Congress from creating loopholes that could be manipulated by the powerful.

Now along comes the tax legislation of 1997, approved by many of the same conservatives in Congress who have called for the flat tax. The 1997 legislation, however, makes the federal

income tax much more complicated, increases paperwork requirements for taxpayers, and creates lots of loopholes that the powerful can manipulate.

The single biggest giveaway is the reduction of the tax rate on capital gains. Back in 1986, Congress cut tax rates across the board but created a single rate for capital gains and ordinary income. The result was indeed a flatter tax system, less susceptible to elaborate tax avoidance schemes. In contrast, the 1997 tax legislation goes in the opposite direction and restores many of the old incentives for tax manipulation.

And yet, in a triumph of political inconsistency, the 1997 tax legislation becomes one more argument in favor of the flat tax. By making the internal revenue code even more complicated, the new law shows how necessary the flat tax is! Like sex offenders who voluntarily plead for castration, flat taxers in Congress can call for radical surgery to stop them from ever again voting for similar legislation. Take away our power to make loopholes, say the great loophole-makers of 1997. But, in the meantime, re-elect us because of the loopholes we created specially for you.

—Paul Starr



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Kenneth Hoover, *Western Washington University*

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